Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 22

www.saipantribune.com | WEDNESDAY JANUARY 31, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

HANMI occupancy at 36% in December 2023. PAGE 2

'Reports show Zoning has enforcement issues.' PAGE 4

$1

Macaranas takes on DPS post pro bono

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Anthony Macaranas, who is the acting Department of Public Safety chief, has taken on the role without pay and will continue to do so even if he is confirmed, saying his only intent to build back the department's reputation and relationship with the community.

See MACARANAS on Page 4

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Anthony Macaranas, who spent most of his life in the police force, has returned to DPS as its acting commissioner following the resignation of former commissioner Clement Bermudes.

4 allegedly involved in illegal transport to Guam indicted

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. government has filed an indictment against four individuals who were allegedly involved in a scheme to transport Chinese nationals from Saipan to Guam illegally.

Assistant U.S. Attorney

See INDICTED on Page 4

IPI, CCC 'making progress' in settlement talks

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom discusses his report during the CCC board's regular monthly meeting at the Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai yesterday morning.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC are reportedly engaged in settlement talks and are "making progress," according to CCC executive director Andrew Yeom yesterday.

With this development, the CCC board agreed yesterday to cancel the administrative hearing set for today, Wednesday, whether or not to revoke IPI's exclusive casino license. The hearing was reset to Feb. 12, 2024.

In his report during the CCC

See IPI on Page 4

Kilili not seeking re-election is 'so unfortunate'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan's (D-MP) recent announcement he will not be seeking a ninth term as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives is "so unfortunate," according to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios last Friday.

Palacios

Palacios said in an interview that the CNMI will be losing a valuable delegate as Sablan has extensive background in U.S. Congress and federal agencies.

"He serves us well. And so, obviously, that was a personal decision," the governor said.

He said the CNMI will search for the best person to

See KILILI on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS

From an outlet operating out of a garage to a full-fledged restaurant, The Angry Penne has now made a name for itself after being awarded the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year.

PAGE 11

ASIA

North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles into waters off its western coast Tuesday in its third launch of such weapons this month.

PAGE 13

LIFE & STYLE

Elon Musk's social media platform X has blocked some searches for Taylor Swift as pornographic deepfake images of the singer have circulated online.

PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Macaranas is acting DPS chief

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Retired police officer Anthony Macaranas has been named acting commissioner of the Department of Public Safety following the abrupt resignation of Clement Bermudes.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios issued Monday a memorandum to all agency and department heads and all DPS personnel informing them that Macaranas will be the acting DPS commissioner until further notice.

"Effective Jan. 30, Anthony I. Macaranas will be hereby designated as the acting Department of Public Safety commissioner until further notice. Please extend your full cooperation and assistance to Mr. Macaranas as he assumes this responsibility," the memorandum states.

Macaranas had actually just been named deputy commissioner of the Department of Corrections last Jan. 8. With his return to DPS as acting commissioner, this leaves DOC without a deputy commissioner.

DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres said in a statement Monday that he fully supports Palacios' decision, even if this has left him again without a deputy commissioner.

"As DOC commissioner and Cabinet member, I 100% fully support our governor and his decision to assign deputy commissioner Macaranas as the new acting DPS commissioner. I will be looking to fill the deputy role at a later time. I am in no rush to fill it," he said.

Macaranas

Ever optimistic, Torres said this assignment is a big win and gain for law enforcement for the CNMI.

"Anthony and I processed this and came to the conclusion that this is not a sad or bittersweet move for us, but a huge win and gain for law enforcement in our Northern Mariana Islands. His qualifications, experience and leadership qualities will enable him to serve effectively in this important role," he said.

Macaranas served as a law enforcement officer for over 30 years before he retired in 2022. It remains unclear is he has come out of retirement, or if he is performing his new duties as DPS commissioner pro bono, which he did as DOC deputy chief.

Torres said that, with Macaranas at the helm of DPS, the Commonwealth "will see a great partnership and collaboration never seen before" between the two departments,

"We've worked together for almost a month and cultivated a great relationship. Our visions are aligned. … There will be no more barriers, impediments and obstacles moving forward as we work together to rebuild trust," he said.

HANMI occupancy at 36% in December 2023

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands reported 36% average occupancy rate among its 11 member-hotels in December 2023, a 12% increase compared to 24% average occupancy among 14 hotels in December 2022.

A total of 26,146 of 71,801 available room nights sold during December 2023, a 43% increase compared to 18,327 of 76,561 available rooms sold in December 2022. Average room rates were $144.73 compared to $150.70 last December.

Overall, in calendar year 2023, average hotel occupancy among HANMI member-hotels was 38% compared to 27% in 2022. In 2023, the average room rate was $142.91 compared to $145.88 in 2022.

In December 2023, there were a total of 97 flights to the Marianas, marking a significant increase of 73% compared to 58 flights in December 2022. December is a high travel period due to holiday and school break travel, especially for families, resulting in more rooms sold.

"On average, HANMI member hotels are still well below the industry benchmark of 80% occupancy to be profitable," said HANMI chair Dennis Seo. "Strengthening the Marianas' competitiveness as a tourism destination and diversifying our source markets are crucial elements for economic recovery. We are optimistic about the potential benefits of the EVS-TAP program for visitors from China, which we fully support. In addition, we are advocating for the reinstatement of Annex VI by the U.S Department of Transportation, which would allow Chinese carriers to provide flight service to Saipan without restriction on passenger flight numbers."

"Furthermore, we are optimistic about the successful resumption of Hong Kong Airlines operations, which we understand is currently in the final stage of approval, with expectations for operations to resume in late March," said Seo. "And we are pleased at the extension of Asiana flight service from Seoul through June 2024. Overall, 2024 is looking to be a year of moderate recovery for the industry with these factors."

As major contributors to the Marianas tourism economy, HANMI member-hotels generated an estimated $8.3 million in local taxes for 2023, 69% more compared to last year's $4.9 million (based solely on gross room sales and a 15% hotel occupancy tax, excluding other sales revenue). Additionally, HANMI provided approximately 1,500 direct jobs in 2023, excluding outsourced manpower.

Hotels included in HANMI's monthly statistical report are Aqua Resort Club, Aquarius Beach Tower, Century Hotel, GrandVrio Resort Saipan, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Kanoa Resort Saipan, Kensington Hotel Saipan, Saipan World Resort, Surfrider Resort Hotel, and Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

HANMI was established in 1985 as a professional forum for the hospitality industry of the Marianas. HANMI also makes regular charitable donations to support non-profit organizations and tourism-related government projects. HANMI membership is open to all qualified hotels and other loading properties for tourists and affiliated business. Membership applications are available at www.saipanhotels.org. ***(PR)***

CNMI's Green Growth Initiative aligns with UN goals

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios signs an executive order establishing the CNMI Green Growth Initiative as Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero looks on at the NMC-CREES Agriculture Research Station in As Perdido last Friday morning. Also in the photo are some lawmakers, NMC and government officials, business representatives, and community members.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios signed Friday an executive order creating the CNMI Green Growth Initiative that he co-chairs with Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero.

Palacios' Executive Order 2024-225 that he signed at the Agriculture Research Station of NMC-Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services in As Perdido launches the CNMI Green Growth Initiative that aligns the CNMI with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

"Today we…embarked on a new journey to achieve a sustainable and regenerative future for our Commonwealth," Palacios said.

He and Deleon Guerrero will set up a working group to create and implement the Green Growth Strategies for action.

NMC-CREES interim dean Patricia Coleman was appointed to be NMC's lead for the working group, while former lawmaker Christina Marie E. Sablan, who is the administration's specialist assistant for climate policy and planning, will be her co-lead.

Palacios said the Green Growth Initiative is not just about changing the word "development," but is also about changing the way people think about development.

"We're changing our mindset. In everything we do, we must think how can we do better for the next generation and the next generation thereafter," the governor said.

Since 2015, nations around the world have committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals to mobilize global efforts to end poverty, improve health and education, protect systems, tackle the climate crisis, and create an equitable, peaceful, and resilient, and prosperous nature.

Palacios said the CNMI has embraced those global Sustainable Development Goals and applied them on to the CNMI through the Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan 2021-2030.

He said the Green Growth Initiative is about translating the plan and aspirations into action and bringing tangible results. "It's about committing ourselves to assume achieving global Sustainable Development Goals through locally different solutions," Palacios said.

He said the Office of the Governor and NMC will lead this initiative, with NMC as the CNMI's Green Growth Hub.

In line with Friday's launch, the CNMI's also intends to join the Local2030 Islands Network as a government partner and island member, Palacios said.

Through this initiative, Palacios said, they will connect with other island communities around the world in setting local Sustainable Growth Goals in strengthening partnerships, tracking progress, and implementing concrete solutions.

In his speech, Deleon Guerrero recounted his family's experience during Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, when he felt helpless. Yet what moved him was the aftermath of the typhoon and how the CNMI collectively came together to survive.

Despite all the buildings that had been leveled, vital infrastructure that had been destroyed, and lives that had been ended, the CNMI's people did not succumb to their worst nature, Deleon Guerrero said

"We didn't fight for gas. We did not turn on each other. Instead, we came together to recover, to rebuild, and to regenerate," he said.

From that moment to this day, the CNMI's people proved that they are not helpless, he said, and the official launch of the CNMI's Green Growth Initiative is a testament to the people's legacy as a community.

By committing to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, the people in the Northern Marianas tell the world that they are stepping up in a big way to help solve those problems, he added.

"We tell the world that we are co stewards and we will do everything we can to save our planet and save each other," Deleon Guerrero said.

At NMC, he said, they wholeheartedly embrace this mindset. He said they are carrying out all these stewardship initiatives as they continue to rebuild their campus, meet the workforce needs of the economy and help the people live meaningful and productive lives.

"We, the NMC Proa Tribe, are proving once again that we are not helpless. We are agents of change. We are stewards of a better tomorrow," he said.

In her speech, Coleman cited their regenerative agriculture demonstration site as a place where people learn how to plant for food, for medicinal use, and for ornamental use.

Coleman said the site was planted largely by volunteers who are willing to relearn and shift their paradigm about how to plant food based on regenerative principles.

Coleman said this regenerative agriculture plot doesn't just represent optimized ecologically sound ways of producing food, but also represents connecting people with nature and each other.

"Because that is really the heart of our work. Regenerating our island to the people who love and care for it. Our vision for the Green Growth Initiative is that it will transcend political divisions and divisiveness and bring about vitality," she said.

Coleman noted that one of the heads of the Federal Emergency Management Agency had commented that, in his 30-plus year career, he has never seen a community so willing to give and help despite how much they'd lost during Super Typhoon Yutu.

"We are the community that took care of each other and took action during the pandemic, resulting in having one of the lowest death rates in the world and definitely in the nation," she said.

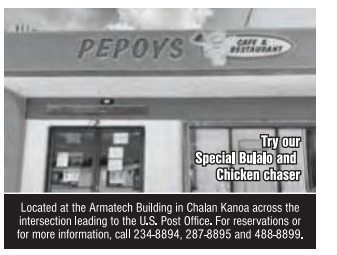
Sablan echoed Deleon Guerrero that there is a lot of work ahead. "The good news is that it's hopeful work and joyful work. The kind of work that feeds the soul," she said.

It is so fitting, Sablan said, that the NMC Agriculture Research Station is the setting for the Green Growth launch because "this is a joyful place."

She said she participated a few months ago in one of NMC-CREES regenerative agroforestry workshops, in which she experienced firsthand the joy and the pride that comes from learning how to grow food in a way that gives back to the earth.

Sablan said regenerative agriculture expert Dr. Craig Elevitch of NMC-CREES promised that they would work with nature to transform that plot into a diverse and abundant food forest. She said she was skeptical, but they were enthusiastic.

"And I'm so pleased to see that the saplings and seeds that we planted just a few months ago—they're in that far right corner of the forest—are growing and thriving today. And I've already signed up for the next workshop," she said.



Located at the Armatech Building in Chalan Kanoa across the intersection leading to the U.S. Post Office. For reservations or for more information, call 234-8894, 287-8895 and 488-8899.

ARTMAN
CORPORATION

SERVICES will be:
- Sewer Pumping
- Snake Wiring
- Portable Toilet Rental
- Portable Hand Wash Station
- Handling Recyclable Wastes

PMB 122 Box 10000
MP 96950, Lower Base
artmancorporation@gmail.com
Please Call: 234-8079 | 287-8079

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

'Reports show Zoning has enforcement issues'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Based on the numbers being reported by the Commonwealth Zoning Board, there are obviously issues on enforcement inspections, according to Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) yesterday.

In highlighting some of the Zoning Board's Citizen Centric Reports, DeLeon Guerrero noted that 701 inspections for compliance with Zoning requirements were done in fiscal year 2022, versus the 142 inspections done in fiscal year 2023.

DeLeon Guerrero talked about the Zoning enforcement issue, among others, during the confirmation hearing for Stephen P. Sablan and Charlotte P. R. Cepeda before the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation Judiciary & Government Operations Committee. Both Sablan and Cepeda are nominees to the Zoning Board.

The SNILD JGO Committee, chaired by DeLeon Guerrero, agreed to prepare a report that recommends that Sablan and Cepeda be confirmed by the entire delegation.

DeLeon Guerrero

DeLeon Guerrero said the Centric Report talks about 278 cases that are ongoing and being monitored by the enforcement staff, and that 156 cases are under enforcement.

The president asked the status of all of these cases that are being monitored by the Zoning Enforcement Division.

"Similarly, if you look at the 2023 [report] it talks about the nominal cases. So the bigger numbers are in fiscal year 2022. So it'd be interesting to find out what is the status of that," she said.

By looking at the numbers of Zoning permits being given out, it's apparent that numbers are either going up or down in particular fiscal years, DeLeon Guerrero said.

She said that's another area of concern when talking about how the CNMI is struggling financially and how the government keeps businesses in place so that they could continue operating in the CNMI, generating revenues, and thriving.

The president underscored the need for absolute collaboration between all the government entities that are responsible in enforcing and making sure that laws are followed. She said it is important in order to have a healthy environment for businesses and the community as a whole.

DeLeon Guerrero also noted that they just recently passed an anti-corruption bill and that in itself should serve as a reminder to elected government officials, including government employees, that they are governed by certain standards.

"And when we start to apply pressure to departments just because a business is calling us to get their permits out or something, we need to be reminded of that," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero said employees need to be empowered, but at the same time be mindful, that a long time wait may not be conducive to the business environment and the economy.

Deleon Guerrero said during the committee's hearing that one of the concerns that was brought up is a gap between the Cannabis Commission and Zoning.

She said they brought that concern to the Cannabis Commission to work together with the Zoning Board so that both entities can move forward with whatever the permitting issues are with respect to establishments that are waiting to be permitted, and so they could operate their cannabis establishment.

"And that's again revenue for the Commonwealth," DeLeon Guerrero said.

INDICTED

From page 1

Eric O'Malley indicted Yan Juan Hu Taitano, Lee Jesse Omar Reyes, Ramon Jose Quitano Sablan, and Maverick Ryan Iguel Marlik yesterday in the U.S. District Court for the NMI for their alleged involvement in the illegal scheme last year.

The U.S. government charges each of the defendant with one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens.

According to the indictment, beginning in or about June 2023, Taitano and Reyes allegedly orchestrated a plan to transport a group of nine Chinese nationals from the Northern Mariana Islands with "intent to unlawfully enter and reside in…Guam, knowing and in reckless disregard of the fact that the Chinese nationals had no right or authority to enter Guam."

To carry out the plan, Taitano and Reyes allegedly hired Sablan and Marlik to captain a small motorboat from Smiling Cove Marina on Saipan to Guam on or about July 9, 2023, for the purpose of transporting the nine Chinese nationals: Li Xiaohua, Dong Chang Cai, Huang Xiulan, Yang Hongjiang, Weng Mei Fang, Wu Yingchun, Gao Kun, Tang Yong Bing, and Li Kun.

According to the indictment, the Chinese nationals agreed to pay Taitano and Reyes up to $5,000 per individual.

"On or about July 9, 2023, the defendants arranged for the boat to pick up the Chinese nationals at Smiling Cove Marina with the goal of transporting [them] to Guam. The Chinese nationals met Taitano and Reyes on at least two occasions to make down-payments; part of which…Taitano and Reyes used to purchase the motorboat that was to be used for the trip," the indictment stated.

The indictment states that Reyes agreed to pay Sablan to drive the boat and to pay Marlik to provide assistance like refueling the boat.

"The boat departed Smiling Cove Marina at approximately 9pm with…Sablan and Marlik as well as the nine Chinese national passengers on board. The boat proceeded south toward…Guam," said the indictment.

However, enroute, the boat ran out of fuel and began to drift just before it reached the island of Rota. They all had to be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The U.S. government is seeking the forfeiture of the vessel used in the alleged crime and the proceeds from carrying out the scheme.

IPI

From page 1

board's monthly meeting at the Springs Plaza yesterday, Yeom asked to put off the revocation hearing, considering that the ongoing settlement discussion is "making certain progress."

Yeom said IPI took the initiative to dismiss its two recent lawsuits against CCC and others.

He said these lawsuits were dismissed without prejudice since the parties have engaged and are making progress in settlement talks in their efforts to reach an amicable resolution.

In the first lawsuit, IPI is complaining about the casino regulatory fee, while in the second case, CCC is questioning the commission's authority.

Yeom said if in case they have a settlement in place by next week or so, he will request for an emergency meeting to confirm the settlement with the board.

He said he will then also request for the board to lift its previous order that suspends IPI's casino license.

Commissioner Mariano Taitano said he knows they will be criticized again for resetting the revocation hearing, but he has no objection with the rescheduling because the parties are talking about a possible settlement.

"Hopefully we'll see a settlement agreement before us," Taitano said.

Assistant attorney general Keisha Blaise, who is counsel for Yeom, said they specifically asked for a short timeframe to reset the hearing because they are aggressively pursuing the settlement and if they fail to achieve that, then they can immediately proceed with the hearing.

Commissioner Ramon M. Dela Cruz said it's never their intention to kill the casino industry as it is their responsibility to keep IPI in compliance.

Dela Cruz said they asked that, as part of the stipulation for the settlement, all pending civil cases against CCC should be dropped.

He said they gave IPI enough time to regroup and proceed if they can pay their obligations.

Board vice chair Rafael Demapan presided the board hearing.

IPI has failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by the Dec. 30, 2023 deadline.

KILILI

From page 1

replace Sablan in Congress.

However, knowing Sablan, he is not just going to walk away and disappear, Palacios said. "He is [going to] engage in one way or another with the community and leadership," the governor said. "I also wish him the best in his retirement. Nothing more than to wish him the best because he serves the people of the Commonwealth well, honorably, and respectfully, and he works very, very hard for us," Palacios said.

In announcing his decision not to seek re-election this November, the 69-year-old Sablan said the time has come to pass this responsibility to a new representative that people will elect.

He said this decision comes after deep personal examination and consultation with his wife, his loved ones, and supporters.

Sablan became the CNMI's first elected delegate to the U.S. House in 2008. He is currently serving his eighth term.

MACARANAS

From page 1

Macaranas, who spent most of his career life in the police force, has already retired but now returns to DPS as its commissioner following the resignation of former commissioner Clement Bermudes.

However, Macaranas hasn't completely returned to government service and retains his retired status, as he has chosen to serve in his new role pro bono. When asked why, Macaranas simply said it's because it is important to him to rebuild the department's reputation, the community's trust in DPS, and most importantly, revive morale within the department.

"The [most important] thing we need to recover is our department's reputation and the trust of our people especially with our police officers. I know they're also hurting, but we will find every avenue to address their issues, going as far as talking with lawmakers regarding avenues available to address their problems and retain our officers. Pay is part [of the problem] and stress from overwork, but I understand the biggest thing hurting them is the salary," he said.

Commonwealth law prohibits double-dipping among government employees and its retirees, when a person receives both pension and a government salary.

Macaranas shared that, although he had every intention of serving as deputy commissioner of the Department of Corrections and help address the "mountain" of existing problems there, when he got the call from Gov. Arnold I. Palacios last Monday afternoon to fill the DPS position, he obliged.

"Coming back here is not new to me. It's my old stomping ground. This is where I became an officer until the day I retired. Coming in this morning, there are a lot of things happening. I've met with the directors, I've met with the commanders, I've also met with other units like Boating Safety, the Coast Guard, Customs and Biosecurity, etc. It's nothing new to me, but it's a continuation of my role here when I left back in 2022.

"When I was down at the Department of Corrections, my intent was to help the commissioner there, to help tackle the mountain of existing problems there from manpower to inmate issues to facility issues. That was the reason I accepted that role. But now that I'm back here, it's another way for me to help out to continue to carry out what the previous commissioner had left and see what other issues we need to cover," he said.

Macaranas added that he is willing to serve at the pleasure of the governor.

"The intent is to be appointed to this role, but it's all up to the governor if he will pursue the route of confirming me, I'm willing to serve. I'm looking forward to addressing the things we need to address," he said.

Although Macaranas is still catching up on the issues within the department to determine his priorities, he said he is determined to close the double homicide case involving Wang Jin Dong and Liu Shuping and ensuring that there are enough officers in the community.

"[My] priority is the ongoing investigation into the double homicide and helping the frontline officers. I know there's issues regarding manpower when dealing with the community following the departure of 12 officers. It kind of put a [dent] in our manpower in the department. Right now, I'm going to be meeting with department commanders to see where they're at so I can make adjustment needed to ensure that there is manpower to address the community's needs," he said.

Macaranas also thanks Bermudes for his service and for all he has done during his time as DPS commissioner.

"I thank former commissioner Bermudes for what he has done here. For every commissioner that has gone through here, they had plans to continue [elevating] this department but I thank him, and I appreciate all his diligent work," he said.

As far as political interference is concerned, Macaranas said he intends to make sure there is none.

"I will do my best not to let politics interfere with the department. There won't be an interference. I expect officers to do what they have to do," he said.

Tomokane, Taruc are NMTech's Employees of the Year for 2023

NMTECH

Northern Marianas Technical Institute Project coordinator Aaron Tomokane and welding instructor Eduardo Taruc pose for a photo after being awarded Employees of the Year on Dec. 22, 2023 at the trades school in Puerto Rico.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Aaron Tomokane and Eduardo Taruc have both been named the Northern Marianas Technical Institute's Employees of the Year for 2023.

Tomokane, who is a projects coordinator at NMTech, and Taruc, who is a welding instructor, were announced as last year's Employees of the Year during NMTech's holiday appreciation party last Dec. 22, which was announced in a news release last Jan. 24, 2024.

Tomokane, who has been with NMTech for two years now, initially served as a procurement specialist before transitioning into his current role as projects coordinator in February 2023. In his new position, Tomokane is responsible for collaborating with local agencies to create educational opportunities for various demographics.

Among Tomokane's notable projects was the coordination of three summer programs at NMTech simultaneously, including 4H Camp Magalahi, Summer Tech, and Natibu Sea Cadet Advanced Training Summer Program. He also led the organization of the first CNMI Safety Conference in partnership with CNMI Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which saw over 75 attendees learning about safety matters such as Fall Protection, Construction Safety, and OSHA Record Keeping. Additionally, Tomokane spearheaded NMTech's 2nd Annual Burn Out Competition at the Island Summer Auto Fest in September. His dedication and hard work earned him the Staff of the Year Award for 2023.

Reflecting on his achievement, Tomokane expressed surprise at receiving the award. "I was surprised since I transitioned to a position that I did not expect to see myself in. It was a new opportunity for me to grow. I was able to do it with the support of my managers," he said.

NMTech CEO Jodina Attao commended Tomokane's over the past year, highlighting his ability to engage and motivate the NMTech team while creating a fun work environment.

"Aaron has grown drastically over the past year, both professionally and personally. He really came a long way. Aaron has a way of engaging and encouraging the team. Aaron also makes the work environment fun," said Attao

The second recipient, Taruc, more popularly known at NMTech as Mr. Ed, has been a welding instructor at NMTech for eight years now and handles Welding Level 1 and 2 classes, both of which concluded in December 2023.

Prior to his role as an instructor, Taruc worked as the lead engineer at the Pacific Islands Club, but since moving to NMTech, his classes have drawn more interest in the past year.

Describing Taruc as a valuable team player, adviser, and educator, Attao expressed gratitude for Taruc's contributions. "Mr. Ed has skills and talents that he passes on to his students on a daily basis. He is always willing to serve NMTech and contribute to any and all projects. He is a great team player, adviser and educator. We are blessed to work with such amazing people."

Speaking on behalf of NMTech, Attao said both Tomokane and Taruc are integral to the NMTech team, and their outstanding contributions have been instrumental to the organization's success. Attao said NMTech looks forward to continued accomplishments with these men in the future.

"Both Aaron and Mr. Ed are phenomenal people and play critical roles at NMTech. We are grateful for their service and look forward to the many accomplishments to come," said Attao.

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS
P.O Box 500830, Saipan MP 96950
Tel. No (670) 234-3751/52/52 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Facebook: facebook.com/DPLCNMI

NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

i. The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 011 L 03, containing an area of approximately 241,037 square meters, Lot 011 L 04, containing an area of approximately 337,564 square meters, and Lot 011 L 02 R/W, containing an area of approximately 2,984 square meters situated in Unai Dankulu, Saipan. A map showing the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands for inspection.

ii. The prospective Lessee is Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort. The list of officers for Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort: Hosik (Brian), Shin, as President, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park, as Vice President and Ji Eun Lee, as Secretary/ Treasurer.

Principal shareholders of Suwaso Corporation is Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by the officers and directors of Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort, mainly by Hosik (Brian) Shin and Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. The Lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a Hotel and Golf Complex.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 40 years with an extension of up to 15 years with approval of the Legislature in accordance with P.L. 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).

The proposed annual rental during the term of the lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of the PM Building, Tinian. A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp

v. The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Unai Dangkulu, Saipan.

vi. The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before February 12, 2024, at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian. A public hearing will be held if requested during the comment period.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TÅNU´ PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku mannånå'i huyung nutisia guini put i intension-ñiha para u ma'atkila metton na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Mariånas. Maseha håyi na pattidå intirisao gi halum hinirât pupbliku siña muna'hålum upiñon, infotmasion, pat testimoniun kinontra gi tinahguin prinoponi siha para i atkilon nu i tanu' pupbliku. Komu mapribeni mås mo'na ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinattitiyi pettanesi na infotmasion manisisita para u mapupblika.

i. I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi komu Lot 011 L 03 ni kunsissisti kåsi 241,037 square meters, Lot 011 L04, ni kunsissisti kåsi 337,564 square meters, yan Lot 011 L02 R/W, ni kunsissisti kåsi 2,984 square meters ni gaigi gi hålum Unai Dangkulu, iya Saipan. I måpa ni ina'a'annuk i lugåt managuaha gi ufisinan Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku para inspeksión.

ii. I prospective lessee i Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort. I listan nu ufisiåt siha para i Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort: Si Hosik (Brian), Shin, komu Presidenti, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park, komu Sigundu Presidenti yan si Ji Eun Lee, komu Sekritâriu/Tresureru.

I prinsipåt na shareholders nu Suwaso Corporation sa i Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. I maproponi na atkilon ha tattiyi i regulasion DPL siha yan ginen manegosiu ni ufisiåt yan direktot nu Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort, mayotmenti ginen as Hosik (Brian), Shin yan si Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. I lessee debi na u usa i lugåt put atyu ha' na rason nu i Hotel and Golf Complex.

I tema nu i maproponi na kontrâtan atkilon sa' kuarenta (40) åñus na tiempu yan i ekstensión asta kinsi åñus na tiempu yan i inaprueban i Lehislatura sigun yan i P.L. 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).

I maproponi na atkilon gi kada' såkkan gi durântin teman kontrâtan i` atkilon mapega gi put sientus i bålin "appraised fair market" i propiedât yan i aplikåo na put sientus nu i "Business Gross Receipts" gi halum i regulasion DPL.

v. I kopian nu i maproponi na kuntrâtan atkilon siña machuli' gi ufisinan i Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku, ni gaigi gi sigundu (2nd) na bibiendan i Joeten Dandan Commercial Building iya Dandan, Saipan, primet (1st) na bibiendan i De'Ana Commercial Building, iya Songsong Village, Luta; pat i primet (1st) na bibiendan i PM Building, giya Tini'an. I kopia debi lokkui' na u managuaha online gi www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. I Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku tåya marisibi ni håfa na tinahguin inofresi siha ni para u ma'atkila i suhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Unai Dangkulu, giya Saipan.

vii. I Sekritâriun Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debi na u aksepta tinigi' upiñon, infotmasion, testimoniun kinontra pat tinahguin prinoponi siha ginin i manintirisão na pattida siha gi pat åntis di Fibreru 12, 2024, gi ufisinan Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Sa'ipan, Luta pat Tini'an. I inekkunguk pupbliku siempri magopti yanggin marikuesta gi durânti i tiempun upiñon.

ARONGORONGOL PPWOMMWOL ATKILÓÓNOL FALUWEER TOULAP

Sángi Tálil 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re isiisiwow arongorong igha re mángemángil rebwe atkkilaay faluweer toulap llól Seipél, Commonwealth Téél Falúw kka Efáng llól Marianas. Schóó kka re tipáli sángi toulap emmwel rebwe isiisilong ischil kkapas, data, views, ngare angiingil ppwomm ikka aa siiwel ngáli ppwommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap. Re bwal ayoora sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e ffil ebwe akkatééwow e amwirimwiritiw:

i. Ppwommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap e bwáá bwe Lot 011 L 03, e lo 241,037 reel square meters, Lot 011 L 04, iye e lo bwe 337,564 reel square meters, me Lot 011 L 02 R/W, iye e lo bwe 2,984 reel square meters iye e lo Unai Dankulu, Seipél. E bwáálo wóól móópal falúw eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap reel ubwe amwuri.

ii. Ppwommwol schóól atkkilóón nge Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point. List-al officers ngáli Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point: Mr. Hosik (Brian), Shin, bwe President, Eunpyung (Calvin), Park Liang, bwe Vice President me Ji Eun Lee, bwe Sekkretóóriyo/Treasurer.Principal shareholder-il Suwaso Corporation nge Micronesia Resort, Inc.

iii. Ppwommwol atkkilóón e angúúngú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi officers me directors-il Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Point, spesiatmente Hosik (Brian) Shin me Gloria Cavanaugh.

iv. Schóól atkkilóón ebwe yááyá falúw ngáli Hotel and Golf Complex. Ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón nge fááigh ráágh fengál me aláálááyi ngáli seigh me limoow ráágh fengál me átirowal Sou Allégh (Legislature) llól angúúngú fengál me P.L 20-84 (1 CMC § 2806(c)(1)).Ppwommwol atkkilóón ghal ráágh atol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón yeel nge e lo reel percentage of the appraised fair market value reel falúw fengál me application percentage of Gross Receipts llól mwóghutughutúl DPL.

v. Pappidil ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón nge emmwel ubwe bweibwogh me reel Bwualsiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap me 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, Seipél; 1st floor me De'Ana Commercial Building, me Apilómwol Songsong, Luuta; me 1st floor me PM Building, Tchiliyól. Ebwal yoor pappid emmwel ubwe amwuri online me www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh siiwelil ppwommw reel atkkilóónol faluweer toulap iye e lo Unai Dangkulu, Seipél.

vii. Sekkretóóriyal Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re bweibwogh ischil kkapas, views, angiingi ngare siiwelil ppwommw sángi schóó kka re mwuschel wóól ngare mmwalil Febreero 12, 2024, me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap iye e lo Seipél, Luuta ngare Tchiliyól. Rebwe ayoora arongorongol toulap ngare re tingór atol mille comment period.

Eight days of collaboration result in 259 fixed pets

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

It was eight and a half days of determination, community, and care as Boonie Babies Saipan and members of the recently reopened Saipan Cares for Animals partnered to fix 259 pets during a spay and neuter clinic that ended on Jan. 19 at the Saipan Cares for Animals Center in Gualo Rai.

The spay and neuter clinic, which lasted from Jan. 8 to 19, was held to help curb the island's stray dog population. Called "New Year, New Boonie," it was a collaborative effort between the two non-profit groups, with Boonie Babies Saipan raising and providing resources and SCA providing the labor.

Sisters Grace and Aria Keilbach of Boonie Babies Saipan and volunteer Emily Chmela said yesterday the "New Year, New Boonie" campaign was a part of their spay and neuter efforts in collaboration with SCA to start 2024 off "on the right paw."

"We're really trying to push for more spay and neuter across the entire island, which is awesome because there are now more than one clinic on island, working to provide the community access to these much needed pet services," said Grace Keilbach.

The sisters shared that veterinarian Dr. Kris Anderson made a return visit to Saipan for the clinic.

"This clinic, with everybody working together, was a full woman team too, which was also really awesome to see. We got 259 animals fixed in eight and a half days, which is absolutely incredible and that's thanks to everyone working together. Like they say time and time again it really takes the entire Island. It's not just a one person, or one organization's job," said Grace Keilbach, adding that they wouldn't have been able to do the operation without help from SCA and the dedication of the community that brought in their pets.

"It really was amazing to see everybody put it together last minute, and I think that's such a testament to Saipan, that no matter what or how difficult it may be, we always see our community coming together at the end of the day," she added.

Aria Keilbach told Saipan Tribune that after announcing the clinic on their social media sites, they received international support, with many donors worldwide sending in a total of $4,800, which covered over half of the surgeries performed so pet owners could have them for free.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Kris Anderson and Boonie Babies Saipan volunteer Arron Chasteen smile during Boonie Babies Saipan and Saipan Cares for Animals' spay and neuter clinic that concluded last Jan. 19 at the Saipan Cares for Animals Center in Gualo Rai.

Because of the sheer number of pets brought in and the services given, the $4,800 sponsorship was quickly exhausted on just the third day, Grace Keilbach said.

"… You have people come in with…like three, four, five dogs. That's about $500, and that's really tough for anyone to afford, so we were able to step in and for anyone wanting to provide a better life for their pets and their family…we weren't going to turn anyone away from that," Grace Keilbach said.

As part of that initiative not to turn anyone away, Grace Keilbach said they continued the clinic and are now actively fundraising to cover the extra cost of the remaining surgeries, an estimated $4,000. Undeterred, Grace Keilbach said they view it as a positive challenge.

The sisters shared that they aim to work closely with SCA to enhance community outreach, education, and fundraising, and in turn SCA will concentrate on the crucial task of providing spay and neuter surgeries and services.

"We're really excited to be working with them and do as many spay and neuter clinics as possible this year. That's a huge part of our 2024 goals and the overall mission is to fix these boonie dogs and make sure they're happy and healthy. We are also actively volunteering [at SCA] and working on bringing some visiting vets this year," said Grace Keilbach.

Aria Keilbach said that SCA did temporarily close last year but is now back but has limited hours "so always check their social media on Facebook and Instagram before heading in, but they do work as often as they can to provide those basic services like vaccines, sick checkups, and they do grooming as well, which is really nice for the community with very limited grooming opportunities out there."

The Keilbach sisters expressed excitement about future collaborations and the opportunity to take Boonie Babies Saipan to new heights. They said they are continuing to work on raising and finding funds, and even exploring grant opportunities to ensure sustained support for the mission to provide pet care and assistance to Saipan's residents.

To find out more about Boonie Babies Saipan, check out their media handles on Instagram, Tiktok and Facebook @booniebabiesrescue or visit their website at https://booniebabiessaipan.com/.

Also see Saipan Cares for Animals on their Facebook page Saipan Cares for Animals CNMI or on their Instagram account @saipancares670.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement (REVISED)

JVA No. 23-002

Opening Date: October 3, 2022
Closing Date: Until Filled

POSITION TITLE:	**Chief Engineer, P.E.**
DEPARTMENT:	**Water & Wastewater Engineering Division**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**Commensurate with Education and Experience**
CONTRACT:	**2 Year Contract, subject to renewal**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") is a government utility providing power, water, and wastewater services in the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), a U.S. Commonwealth in the western pacific. CUC is under a Stipulated order of the United States of America vs. the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Civil Case 08-0051 filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The incumbent of this position is under the overall supervision of the Deputy Executive Director (Water and Waste Water) or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Coordinates and meets with other divisional sections and corporate divisions to coordinate activities and projects.
- Supervises engineering support staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work, conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staffs are trained; and, making, hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.
- Performs project management activities to include preparing reports, memorandums and recommendations; developing scope of work, providing technical reviews; surveying for projects, evaluating proposals, monitoring project process, approving payment, and, recommending award of projects.
- Prepares engineering designs, plans and specifications, collects date and performs research.
- Troubleshoots systems and equipment. Reviews work performed by engineers. Performs other duties of a similar nature or level as required by CUC and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Minimum Requirements:
Education: Bachelor's Degree in Civil, Mechanical, or Electrical Engineering. Registration as a Professional Engineer pursuant to the National Council of Engineering Examiners standards in either the civil, mechanical or electrical branch; Experience of ten (10) or more years as a professional engineer.
Demonstrate the following: Proven management and communication skills; Demonstrated ability to lead, motivate, and develop staff; Competency and proficiency in overseeing major drinking water and wastewater systems during the periods of planning,, design, construction, and operation of drinking water systems' production, treatment, and distribution, and in wastewater treatment, collection and conveyance systems.
Knowledge of: Safe work practices; Applicable Federal, State, and/or Local laws, rules and regulations; Project management principles; Mathematical concepts; Construction principles; Engineering principles and practices.
Skills in: Monitoring and evaluating staff; Prioritizing and assigning work to staff; Managing multiple projects; Interpreting and applying Federal, State, and/or Local laws, rules and regulations; Interpreting drawings; Preparing a variety of technical report and/or documentation; Presenting technical information to management, public groups, and other related individuals; Reading and interpreting scaled drawings; Preparing specifications, plans, and cost estimates; Conducting studies; Using computers and related software applications; Communication, interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers,
supervisor, the general public, etc. sufficient to exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

•**Licensing**: o A valid driver's license with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

Relocation Expenses: If hired from outside the CNMI, relocation expenses are negotiable; but they are not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving to Saipan and not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving away from Saipan. Receipts will be required for justification. Other conditions may be applicable.

Submission process:
Please submit (1) a cover letter, (2) a resume, (3) a list of references, (4) a CUC Employment Application and (5) copy of supporting documents by one of the following means:

1. United States Postal Service, First Class Mail or Priority Mail:
   Human Resource Office
   Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
   P.O. Box 501220 Saipan, MP 96950-1220 USA
   *If you choose to submit via USPS, please still also fax "or" email "or" drop off your package.
2. Fax: 670-235-5131
3. Email: employment.applications@cucgov.org
4. Drop Off: Drop off your package at the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Otherwise, you may drop it off at the CUC Tinian or Rota Administration Office.

Policies: The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation is an equal opportunity provider and employer and will not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against any employee or applicant in any manner prohibited by law.

It is also the policy of CUC to achieve a drug-free workplace and person selected for employment will be required to pass a drug test which screens for illegal drug use prior to final appointment.

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement (REVISED)

JVA No. 23-101

Opening Date: Wednesday, August 02, 2023
Closing Date: UNTIL FILLED

POSITION TITLE:	**Executive Director**
DEPARTMENT:	**Executive Directors Office**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**Commensurate with Education and Experience**
CONTRACT:	**Two Year Contract, subject to renewal**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Board of Directors or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Supervises staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staff is trained; ensuring that employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.
- Assumes full management responsibility for all of CUC's divisions and services.
- Directs and oversees the strategic planning, development and implementation of programs and services; directs operations within financial constraints and in accordance with CUC policies, regulations, and under the direction of the Board.
- Monitors and evaluates efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and processes; assesses and monitors service delivery levels; identifies opportunities, weaknesses and strengths of divisions; directs the implementation of changes.
- Plans, directs and coordinates work of divisions through the upper management team by meeting with management to identify, prioritize and resolve problems. Manages the development and implementation of goals, objectives, missions, policies, priorities and allocations of resources.
- Participates on a variety of board and committees and attends a wide variety of management meetings. Performs short and long-range strategic planning. Prepares and submits annual budget recommendations and financial analysis for Board approval; implements, communicates and administers approved budget; ensures fiscal compliance. Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements: Master's degree in management, engineering, finance, or public administration, "OR", in the alternative, a bachelor's degree in engineering and registration as a Professional Engineer pursuant to the National Council of Engineering Examiners standards in either the civil, mechanical, or electrical branch; Senior management experience of at least ten (10) years in a similar wastewater, drinking water, and/or power utility (preferably combined utility), with similar or greater capital and operating budgets, capital improvement projects, human resource needs, utility financing issues, operation and maintenance training and implementation needs. In addition, the Executive Director (ED) shall demonstrate the following: Proven management and communication skills; Demonstrated ability to lead, motivate, and develop staff; Experience with managing major drinking water and wastewater systems during periods of planning, design, and construction; and Experience with drinking water and wastewater systems; user fee system development; bond funding; staff training and development; and federal drinking water and wastewater requirements.

Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Advanced managerial principles, practices and techniques; Leadership principles; Utility service administration principles and practices; Financial management and forecasting principles; Strategy development principles and procedures; Contract management principles; Risk management principles; Customer service principles; Project management principles; Modern office technology.

Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Managing, monitoring, and evaluating subordinates; Providing organizational leadership and administration; Developing and executing strategic plans, programs, and policies; Planning and oversight of organizational programs and functions; Providing strategic and visionary thinking; Providing short and long-range planning, development and implementation; Forecasting, developing and administering organization budget; Critical thinking and independent decision making; Providing legal, policy and contractual compliance oversight; Serving as organization representative to management, the Board and external stakeholders; Preparing and delivering public presentations; Providing fiscally sound decision making; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

Licensing: Valid CNMI Driver's License or one from a U.S. jurisdiction with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

Relocation Expenses: If hired from outside the CNMI, relocation expenses are negotiable; but they are not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving to Saipan and not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving away from Saipan. Receipts will be required for justification. Other conditions may be applicable.

How to Apply: To apply, please submit a resume, cover letter, a list of references, and a CUC Employment Application by one of the following means:

1. United States Postal Service, First Class Mail or Priority Mail*:
   Human Resource Office
   Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
   P. O. Box 501220 Saipan, MP 96950-1220 USA

***If you choose to submit via USPS, please still also fax "or" email "or" drop off your package.**

2. Fax:
   670-235-5131
3. Drop Off:

You may submit your CUC Employment Application and/or resume at the Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (except legal holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota can drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

UOG to host Guam's third Migratory Bird Celebration on Feb. 17

GUAM—Avian and nature enthusiasts of all ages are invited to flock to Jeff's Pirates Cove on Saturday, Feb. 17, for the third annual Migratory Bird Celebration. The community festival will take place from 9am to 1pm featuring educational booths, hands-on activities, and live music and dance performances.

Hosted by the University of Guam College of Natural and Applied Sciences, UOG Sea Grant, and the UOG Center for Island Sustainability, the event aims to use science and art to inspire conservation of Guam's native and migratory birds and the habitats they depend on.

Native birds play an important role in island ecosystems as seed dispersers, predators of pests, and pollinators of plants, but their numbers in Guam have declined due to predation by introduced species, such as brown tree snakes, and other potential factors, like pesticide usage and habitat alteration.

In addition to native birds, around 20 to 30 migratory bird species visit Guam regularly—particularly, shorebirds, seabirds, ducks, and herons—according to avian ecologist Martin Kastner. Some of these birds are beneficial as predators of pests, like rhino beetle grubs, but they are threatened by shoreline development, wetland drainage, and disturbance by feral dogs and cats.

UOG

A guest at the Migratory Bird Celebration on Feb. 11, 2023, learns about Guam's endemic ko'ko' bird, which is now extinct in the wild, at the Guam Department of Agriculture booth. The festival will take place again this year, on Saturday, Feb. 17, at Jeff's Pirates Cove in Ipan.

Highlights of this year's Migratory Bird Celebration will be bird watching and identification tours led by Kastner, habitat conservation and natural resources expertise from the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and UOG Sea Grant, a paint-your-own watercolor activity with the Marianas Audubon Society, a dance performance choreographed by Luna Schils and performed by Schils and Gabby Calvo, and a middle and high school art contest focused on migratory birds.

Visitors are encouraged to bring their own reusable bags and water bottles, and 10% of all food purchased at Jeff's Pirates Cove during the event will be donated to the Marianas Audubon Society—a group dedicated to the protection of birds and their habitats through the Mariana Islands.

For more information on the event, please call (671) 788-6300 or (671) 735-2060.

Middle and high school art competition

Students in 6th to 12th grade are invited to participate in a first-time art competition at the Migratory Bird Celebration. Art pieces may be created in the student's medium of choice and should highlight one of the following migratory birds of Guam:

- Pacific Golden Plover
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Eurasian Whimbrel
- Pacific Reef Heron

The artwork should show the bird in its natural environment or associated with the topic of either conservation, pollution, or human-made activities. Photos and information on each bird can be found at www.uog.edu/wptrc/ebooks.

To confirm participation in the art contest and get more information, please email alvarezm12035@triton.uog.edu by Feb. 2. The pieces will be featured at the bird festival on Feb. 17, where a panel of local artists will choose the winning pieces based on adherence to the theme, the creative approach, and general aesthetics. ***(UOG)***

NEW TRUCK FOR SALVATION ARMY CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The ongoing partnership with the Salvation Army produced another donation of equipment from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The need for a larger truck to move donations and products to various locations was communicated to the Humanitarian Department of the church. The donation was approved, and the truck, a 2023 GMC 3500, was in the United States and shipped to Guam. On arrival, the truck was fitted with a hydraulic lift gate to ease loading and unloading. Everyone involved was pleased with the outcome of the donation and believes it will last for many years to come.

Community comes together for 1000 Steps cleanup, beautification effort

MANGILAO, Guam—On Jan. 20, 2024, nearly 100 volunteers attended an event at 1000 Steps organized by Tåno, Tåsi, yan Todu, a 501©(3) non-profit organization working with local communities to restore and protect ecosystems across the Mariana Islands.

The event was coordinated to support initiatives being advanced by Mangilao Mayor Allan Ungacta and the Guam Department of Agriculture. Volunteers removed 7,000 lbs of trash and replaced 30 invasive African tulip trees with dukduk, atmahåyan, sayåfi, a'abang, and other native trees to restore the neighborhood and entrance to the 1000 Steps trailhead.

As part of the project "I Hålom Tåno Para I Yo'åmte" (The Forest for a Deeper Healing), TTT recently conducted biological surveys in the area to restore a limestone forest uniquely suited to support medicinal plants (åmot) and federally-listed plants and animals.

"Removing the invasive African tulips and replacing them with native species is one of many things we can do to support our rich and unique limestone forests," said Christine Fejeran, chief of the Guam Department of Agriculture Forestry & Soil Resources Division.

Volunteers collected 82 tires, 7,000 lbs of household waste, metal waste, recyclables, and a remaining abandoned vehicle along Jesus L. Bamba Road and the 1000 Steps trailhead.

» 7,000 lbs of trash and dozens of invasive plants removed, 20 native trees planted

Ungacta previously removed several abandoned vehicles and collected household waste and other debris dumped along the roadside and entrance to the popular tourist attraction.

"It was really great having so many students, residents, and military personnel join us to combat illegal dumping in the village, beautify this peaceful neighborhood, and help restore the

entrance to this popular hike trail for Guam's people and visitors," said Mayor Ungacta.

Tåno, Tåsi, yan Todu was joined by the Guam Extreme Cleanup Crew, as well as students earning service learning hours from John F. Kennedy High School, Tiyan High School, Guam High School and other schools, and NCMB 133 military members from Mississippi.

This project was funded by a competitive grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with funding support from the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program as part of the Joint Region Marianas REPI initiative. ***(PR)***

PROCUREMENT SERVICES • CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-BECQ/RT-42400040

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 29, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR BECQ ON ROTA"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY BY FEBRUARY 20, 2024, TO MRS. ZABRINA S. CRUZ VIA EMAIL AT zabrina.shai@becq.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RICHARD V. SALAS
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement (REVISED)

JVA No. 23-070
Opening Date: April 21, 2023
Closing Date: UNTIL FILLED

POSITION TITLE:	**Chief Financial Officer**
DEPARTMENT:	**Executive Directors Office**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**Commensurate with Education and Experience**
CONTRACT:	**Two Year Contract, subject to renewal**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

Reporting directly to CUC's Executive Director ("ED") or designee, the Chief Financial Officer ("CFO") works directly with the Deputy Executive Director ("DED"). The CFO fills a position required by the Stipulated Order ("SO") of the United States of America vs. the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, Civil Case No. CV 08-0051. The Corporation is seeking a dynamic, experienced professional with strong collaborative leadership skills and demonstrated expertise in all areas of municipal and utility finance.

Duties:
- Responsible for the overall accounting, budgeting, and financial operations of CUC.
- Supervises financial professionals and support staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staffs are trained; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.
- Maintains the financial and budget records and accounts for monthly and annual reporting of CUC.
- Performs financial, budget and rate analyses of operations and revenues; makes recommendations for adjustments to rates.
- Develops, implements and enforces financial and budget policies and procedures.
- Directing preparation, analysis, implementation, and monitoring of the utilities' financial reporting and budget process.
- Prepares complex financial and budget reports and special reports as requested by the Board and ED supervising and interpreting study results, including cost of service studies.
- Schedules and coordinates annual audits with independent contractors.
- Prepares monthly and an annual financial report of the financial condition of CUC.
- Plans, implements and monitors short and long-term goals for the department and CUC.
- Debt management, issuance and administration.
- Prepares audit responses and ensure that appropriate corrective actions are executed;
- Review accuracy of billing adjustments to individual accounts from billing staff and receivable accounts.
- Conduct annual performance evaluation of accounting staff.
- Other duties of a similar nature or level as assigned or required.

Minimum Requirements: Bachelor's degree in accounting, economics, financial management, public or business administration from a United States accredited institution or one with equivalent accreditation. Ten (10) years of professional experience in governmental or financial accounting, including experience in a supervisory and/or management position.

Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Thorough knowledge of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, as well as Financial Accounting Standards Board and Government Accounting Standards Board pronouncements and interpretations, auditing principles, and utility rate structures and rate setting principles and methods; Working knowledge of automated financial systems and programs to manage all aspects of reporting, personnel management and training; General knowledge of utility operations, debt collection practices, and limitations. Supervisory principles; Managerial and leadership principles; Generally Accepted Accounting Principles or other applicable laws, rules and regulations; Budgetary principles; Financial principles; Mathematical principles.

Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Managing, monitoring, and evaluating subordinates; Providing organizational leadership and administration; Developing and executing strategic plans, programs, and policies; Planning and oversight of organizational programs and functions; Providing strategic and visionary thinking; Providing short and long-range planning, development and implementation; Forecasting, developing and administering organization budget; Critical thinking and independent decision making; Providing legal, policy and contractual compliance oversight; Serving as organization representative to management, the Board and external stakeholders; Preparing and delivering public presentations; Providing fiscally sound decision making; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

Licensing: • Valid CNMI Driver's License or one from a U.S. jurisdiction with appropriate class.
• A Certified Public Accountant or Certified Management Accountant is highly desired.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

Relocation Expenses: If hired from outside the CNMI, relocation expenses are negotiable; but they are not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving to Saipan and not to exceed $10,000.00 for moving away from Saipan. Receipts will be required for justification. Other conditions may be applicable.

How to Apply: To apply, please submit a resume, cover letter, a list of references, and a CUC Employment Application by one of the following means:
1. United States Postal Service, First Class Mail or Priority Mail*:
Human Resource Office
Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
P. O. Box 501220 Saipan, MP 96950-1220 USA

***If you choose to submit via USPS, please still also fax "or" email "or" drop off your package.**
2. Fax: 670-235-5131
3. Drop Off:

You may submit your CUC Employment Application and/or resume at the Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (except legal holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota can drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 22

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

The Saudis' plan for Israel and Gaza leads back to the same old questions of autonomy and safety

America's campuses may be filled with support for the Palestinians and harsh criticism for Israel, but Hamas has enjoyed more support in Cambridge and Oakland, and on the Chicago City Council, than in Riyadh, Doha or Dubai.

After all, the Saudis could have organized an oil boycott to exert pressure on the U.S., Britain and Israel's other allies. The United Arab Emirates could have immediately severed diplomatic ties with Israel. Neither of those things happened.

Iran and Lebanon, of course, are another matter. And Egypt is very complicated. But the Saudis, Quataris and the U.A.E. clearly see the crudely theocratic Hamas as a threat to their economic stability and a distraction from such important matters as new soccer and golf leagues with global stars and Dubai's Bugatti Residences by Binghatti, the luxury automaker's first foray into residential development.

Long-term Middle East instability courtesy of jihadists is the last thing they desire. They're well aware that the war-related collapse of tourism and international business in Israel, and the headlines of trauma in Gaza, are hurting their own ambitions.

If you parse their recent utterances, it's clear that the booming Middle East wants Benjamin Netanyahu gone, but not by himself.

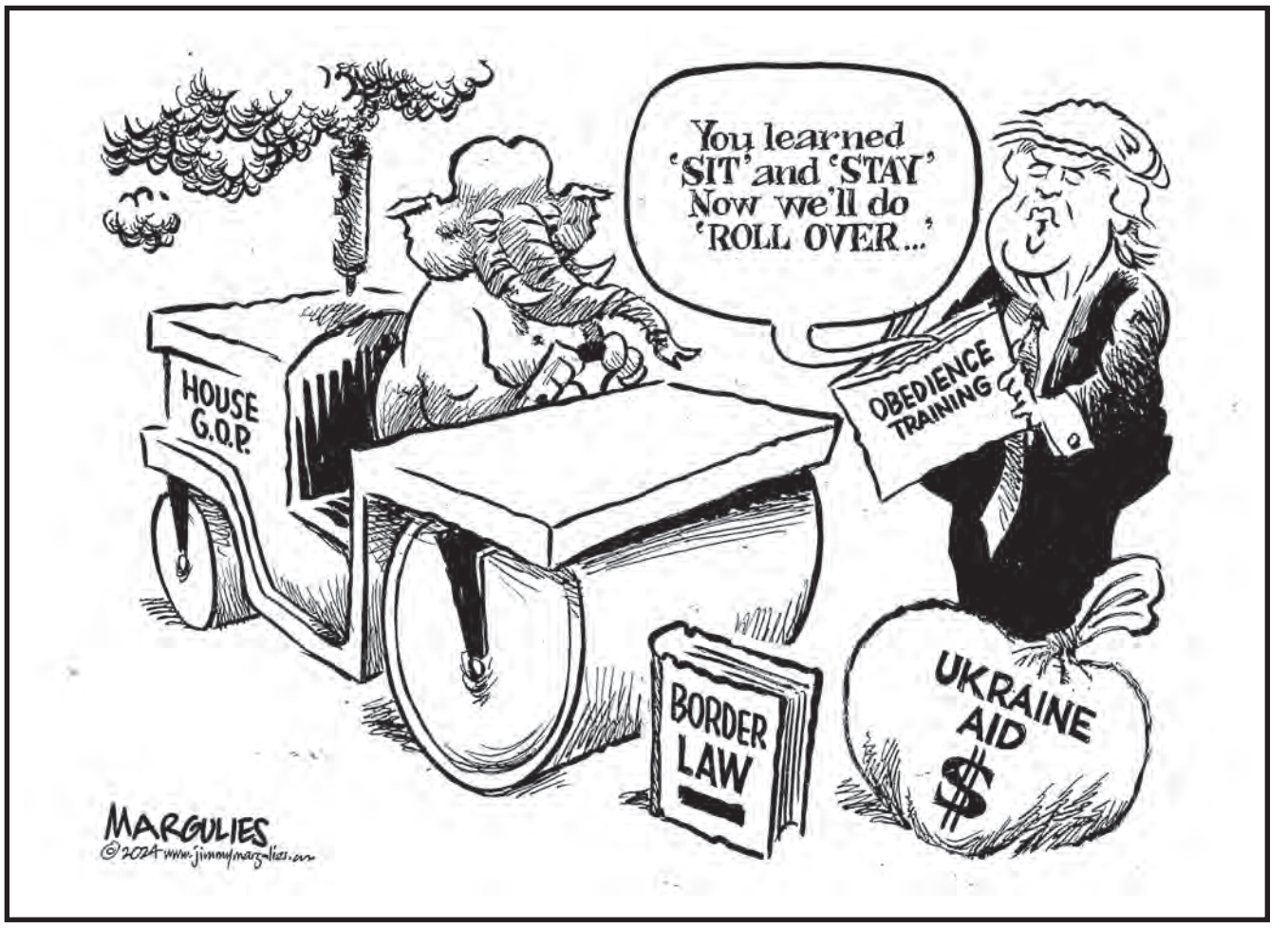
They're hardly alone in their disdain for the Israeli prime minister: Netanyahu is under yet more domestic pressure following the the deaths of 24 Israeli soldiers (including 21 reservists) on Monday, his small nation's biggest one-day loss since its ground offensive in Gaza began in October. And in the U.S., Joe Biden now needs to guard his left flank going into a reelection campaign. Given the palpable rhetorical shift at the White House, staffers clearly are worried about appearing too close to a man many Democrats see as a big problem.

As the war in Gaza drags on and Netanyahu's stated goal of eradicating Hamas struggles to find practical definition, which was always going to be a problem, it's hard to imagine the U.S. moving closer to the Israeli leader in coming weeks. Few U.S. tears would accompany his exit, and we would not be among the exceptions.

That said, it's also clear that the secular portion of the Arab world views Hamas leadership in much the same terms, not to mention their disdain for Mahmoud Abbas, the ineffective leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, a view shared by some Palestinians of our acquaintance. They'd like to see all of these leaders gone. We agree.

On Tuesday, Reuters reported that a senior Egyptian official said that Israel had proposed through mediators a "two-month cease-fire in which the hostages would be freed in exchange

See SAUDIS on Page 9



Reap the benefits of going dry during January (or any time of year)

By LAURA WASHINGTON
Chicago Tribune

Laura Washington is a political commentator and longtime Chicago journalist. Her columns appear in the Tribune each Monday. Write to her at LauraLauraWashington@gmail.com.

"Dry January" will soon be a misty memory. As it fades away, is it making a difference?

I can't speak personally to that since I abstained. Not because I didn't want to participate, but because the new year was already underway when I discovered that Dry January is a burgeoning trend.

Alcohol Change UK, a British charity, launched the Dry January public health initiative in 2013. The effort urges participants worldwide to give up beer, wine and other alcoholic consumption for the 31 days in January.

I have noticed it popping up in my social media feeds. One bleak message, in white on a black background, scrolled by. "Dry January is tough," a Facebook friend posted—on Jan. 3. There were others who cheered on participants, with a lot of "You got this!"

The web offers a multitude of suggestions for mocktails as alcohol substitutes. Pucker up for a drivers mix, a concoction of orange, cranberry, raspberry and lime. Get hot with a Sweethaven tonic pineapple, turmeric and jalapeno Paloma mocktail. My favorite wine is chardonnay, so I was intrigued by the bottle of Thomson & Scott Noughty dealcoholized sparkling chardonnay, available on Amazon.

It's all new to me, but it resonates. The Christmas season is my favorite time of year, but by the end of December, I can't wait for New Year's Day. I get exhausted from all the holiday fun. I desperately need rest from the piles of food and rivers of overflowing booze at the parties and celebrations. It's fun while it lasts, but it lasts way too long. Yet, I had never considered extending the respite for a whole month. After reading up on it, I must admire the impulse.

"Now millions take part in this health challenge every year," according to a blog by Harvard Health Publishing.

The movement is growing. A survey shows that 24% of U.S. respondents older than 21 said they were "highly likely" to go alcohol-free in Dry January last year, while 58% were not planning to give up alcohol, according to CivicScience, a digital opinion research firm. By 2024, 27% of drinkers said they were "very likely" to give up drinking this month, compared with 51% who said they would not. CivicScience data has shown that interest in living an alcohol-free life is growing, and "nearly 1 in 3 adults who drink might change their habits due to research about the effects of alcohol."

You might be skeptical that one booze-free month can make much of a dent in your health profile. "Yet, cutting out alcohol for even a month can make a noticeable difference in your health," Matthew Solan, executive editor of Harvard Men's Health Watch, recently wrote. "Regular drinkers who abstained from alcohol for 30 days slept better, had more energy, and lost weight, according to a study in BMJ Open (a medical research journal). They also lowered their blood pressure and cholesterol levels and reduced cancer-related proteins in their blood."

Other benefits, experts say, include higher energy levels and relief from anxiety and depression. My alter ego, "The Fat Nag," is delighted. For decades, I have been nagging all in earshot to get the fat off. Cutting back on the beers, martinis and vino is a surefire formula to get you there.

The surge in interest in Dry January comes at a propitious time, as we struggle to emerge from a life-changing pandemic. Solan cited research from the National Institutes of Health. In the first year of the pandemic, alcohol sales in the United States jumped by nearly 3%, the biggest increase in more than 50 years.

"Multiple small studies suggest that during the pandemic, about 25% of people drank more than usual, often to cope with stress. Sales of hard liquor, or spirits, accounted for most of the increase," said George Koob, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. During the first two years of the pandemic, the number of death certificates that cited alcohol as a factor jumped from 78,927 to 108,791, or nearly 38%, Koob said. The largest increases in alcohol-related deaths occurred among younger people, ages 25 to 44.

It can really get even scarier. Alcohol Change UK offers this warning:

"People who are clinically alcohol dependent can die if they suddenly, completely stop drinking," it warns on the Dry January website. "If you experience fits, shaking hands, sweating, seeing things that are not real, depression, anxiety, or difficulty sleeping after a period of drinking and while sobering up, then you may be clinically alcohol dependent and should NOT suddenly, completely stop drinking."

That's enough to make anyone think about going cold turkey.

It's too late to jump on the Dry January train, but how about a dry Lent? Fat Tuesday is just around the bend.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

A pedophile priest. A $10 million payout. A monster who won't leave my life

By GUSTAVO ARELLANO
Los Angeles Times

Gustavo Arellano is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

Most reporters have covered a story so disturbing that they never want to think about it again—yet the evil subject makes it impossible to ever forget.

My cross to bear is Father Eleuterio Ramos.

The Montebello native terrorized Catholic parishes in Orange and Los Angeles counties during the 1970s and 1980s, once admitting to detectives that he had molested "at least" 25 boys. Church officials knew about Ramos' depravity almost from the beginning of his career, yet never turned him over to law enforcement or even removed him from the ministry. Instead, they moved him from parish to parish until the Diocese of Orange asked the Diocese of Tijuana in 1985 to accept him—after he confessed to having "slipped," according to a church memo.

The Orange diocese settled five sex abuse lawsuits against Ramos during the 1990s. Eleven lawsuits were still pending when Ramos died 20 years ago this March at age 65. I was a young reporter at the time. The Catholic Church sex abuse scandal was my first big story—and Ramos was my Moby Dick.

I interviewed many of his victims, shared tips and photos with the lawyers who were trying to find his whereabouts just like I was, and read through hundreds of pages of once-secret personnel files. They revealed in excruciating detail not just Ramos' sex crimes but the sin of silence practiced by his superiors. He was the subject of the longest story of my career—over 10,000 words—in late 2005 and dozens of articles in the years that followed.

Yet long after my regular coverage petered out, Ramos remains in my life.

He's there every time I attend a baptism, wedding or funeral at St. Anthony Claret in Anaheim, a church frequented by people from my ancestral ranchos in Zacatecas that is the last O.C. parish where Ramos served. Every couple of years, a Ramos victim finds my work on their molester and reaches out to thank me. Any time I've had an urge to return to the Catholic Church, I remember why I stopped attending Mass in the first place: my disgust at the local bishops and monsignors who let Ramos molest with impunity.

Ramos has cast such a specter over me that when I received a text from attorney John Manly that his firm had reached a large settlement in a clerical sex abuse case, I immediately guessed who the perpetrator was.

The plaintiff alleged that Ramos and another priest, Siegfried Widera, molested him while he attended Immaculate Heart of Mary in Santa Ana during the 1970s and 1980s. Church leaders in Orange and Los Angeles counties did nothing to stop the abuse, despite repeated warnings from parishioners, staff and even a fellow priest, the lawsuit alleged.

The $10 million settlement, finalized in December, requires the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, where Ramos began his career and which had jurisdiction over Catholic churches in Orange County until 1976, to pay $500,000. The Orange diocese will cover the other $9.5 million.

Through Manly, the plaintiff declined to speak to me. The Times does not identify victims of sexual abuse without their consent.

In a statement, spokesperson Jarryd Gonzales said that the Orange diocese "deeply regrets any past incidences of sexual abuse," adding that "the allegations in this case date back more than 40 years and do not reflect the Diocese of Orange as it stands today."

Archdiocese of Los Angeles spokesperson Yannina Diaz said she couldn't comment on the terms of the settlement, which was finalized in December. The archdiocese "stands against any sexual misconduct and is resolute in our support for victim-survivors of abuse regardless of when the abuse occurred," she said.

The recent settlement is Manly, Stewart & Finaldi's largest involving an individual plaintiff in a sex abuse case against the Catholic church and one of nearly 4,000 cases filed against Catholic dioceses across California under a 2020 state law that opened a three-year window for sex abuse victims to sue, with no statute of limitations. Manly, who with his law partner, Morgan Stewart, has spent nearly the past quarter-century suing the Catholic Church in California and beyond, is handling over 200 of those cases, 25 of them against the Orange diocese.

Nine of the lawsuits name Ramos.

I recently visited Manly and Stewart at their law offices, which take up the eighth floor of an Irvine high-rise. The lobby and conference room feature newspaper and magazine clippings from a career pursuing some of the most notorious sex abuse cover ups of this century. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Miramonte Elementary in South L.A. The Boy Scouts. Gynecologists at USC and UCLA. USA Gymnastics.

Thousands of clients. Over $1.5 billion in settlements.

Manly and Stewart sat at opposite ends of a huge table along with Courtney Thom, a former Orange County sex crimes prosecutor who joined their firm three years ago. I've known the two men for 20 years now, and they really haven't changed. Manly remains the loud one with a wicked sense of humor and the bluster of a defensive line coach, while Stewart is still the quiet-yet-forceful voice of reason.

We exchanged our usual pleasantries, then got down to the business that seemed to reunite us every couple of years.

"I'm up to 62 [Ramos] victims," Stewart said. "Every f— place that had a school, they placed him there."

"You have all these connecting pieces, and church leaders didn't do anything," Manly interjected. Then he threw his hands over his head. "Well, they did worse than that. They actively concealed."

Manly first heard about Ramos in the late 1990s, when he was deposing then-Orange Bishop Norman McFarland—who presided over my First Communion—in another sex abuse case. At one point, McFarland named one of Ramos' victims, a friend of Manly who had graduated alongside him at Mater Dei but never told him about the abuse.

Manly asked for a break. He went to the bathroom and vomited.

"That event is the reason I stopped going to Mass," he said.

In late 2004, his firm settled five Ramos cases against the Orange diocese as part of a $100-million settlement involving 87 victims—at the time, the largest settlement against a Catholic diocese in the U.S. They moved on to other cases, but Ramos' pervasiveness and perversity haunted the two.

"He's a case study of how to molest boys," said Stewart.

"The thing about Ramos is that he's so relentless at what he did, and so blatant," Manly added. "He never stopped hiding things at all."

Taking on more Ramos cases allowed Stewart to find new evidence of how far church officials went to cover up for the priest. Personnel files showed that the Orange diocese removed Ramos from Immaculate Heart of Mary and sent him to a Massachusetts recovery facility for Catholic priests—for alleged alcoholism. Stewart got a sworn affidavit from Ramos' counselor at the facility, who said she had recommended that he not return to the ministry.

"If you know anything about Ramos, you know the depth of hurt he caused," Manly exclaimed, his angry voice ringing in the conference room. Stewart and Thom nodded. "So why did they keep him? People kept threatening to call the police. There's all this reporting, and nothing."

I, too, found new connections going through my Ramos files. I once uncovered a 1975 Archdiocese of Los Angeles memo addressed to a Monsignor Hawkes, recommending that Ramos enter psychological care at the suggestion of "the district attorney as a result of a recent incident."

Reading it again, I realized who the monsignor was: Benjamin Hawkes, long one of the most powerful men in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and someone who church officials concluded had molested boys and settled with two of his victims.

Ramos remains the gift that keeps on giving—gifts no one should ever want to receive.

After speaking to them for about an hour, I asked Manly and Stewart if going after monsters like Ramos ever weighed on them.

"What am I going to do?" Manly deadpanned. "Sell hot dogs?" Then he got serious.

"For 25 years, I've made close friends, and I think our work has changed the world." Going after sex abuses "was my vocation," Manly said.

"I don't intend to stop," Stewart added. "I spoke to 10 survivors this morning. What keeps me going is every one of those expressed their gratitude. They'll say, 'When I see your name in the paper, I say, 'I'm proud you're my lawyer.' You see these people that need a voice, and you give it to them."

"I wreck every cocktail party when I tell them what I do," Manly cracked, unable to resist another joke, because that's the type of guy he is. Then he grew quiet.

"But like the saying goes, you want to be on the side of the angels."

SAUDIS

From page 8

for the release of Palestinians prisoners held in Israel and allowing top Hamas leaders in Gaza to relocate to other countries." If Israel could be assured that the Hamas leadership was no longer in Gaza, as distinct from hiding in hospitals and crowded towns, it would be easier for them to limit civilian casualties, logic would suggest. Of course, that begs the question of verification, not to mention where they would go and how welcome they would be on arrival.

A moot point for now. Hamas, the news agency reported, rejected the proposal, insisting on releasing no more hostages without Israeli's withdrawal from Gaza and an end to all hostilities. That's not going to happen, given a traumatized Israel's legitimate worries about its security and, of course, Netanyahu's similarly understandable need to ensure Israelis do not ever believe their parents, sons and daughters to have died in vain.

Simply put, there now is a need for different thinking by different leaders. All around.

In that context, we're intrigued by the recent proposal by the Arab states that would dangle the hefty carrot of the Saudis normalizing their official relationship with Israel in return for Israel's commitment, or recommitment, to a healthy Palestinian state.

Many Israelis think the Saudis will come to the realization that they and Israel have to band together to fight common enemies: Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq. It's also true that normalized relationships are much lower on the list of priorities for the average Israeli than feeling safe and recovering from the trauma of last fall, pain surely reignited by Monday's losses. In Gaza, of course, tens of thousands have died and some 85% of the population have fled their homes and mostly moved south in search of their own safety, an elusive quest for those families.

But the oil-rich Saudis also are dangling another carrot through the mouth of Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan: financing the rebuilding of Gaza. That too, they are saying, requires an Israeli commitment to a Palestinian state.

Many Israelis believe they have seen this movie before and know how it ends. Still, someone will have to rebuild Gaza, which largely has been leveled, and the open Saudi checkbook surely is preferable to a permanent Israeli occupation with more settlements, more Palestinians displaced and conflict intensifying over the years to come. Most reasonable people can see that.

And if the Saudis are paying to rebuild Gaza even as they normalize relationships with Israel, does it not follow that a new Saudi-influenced Gaza could operate under the same pragmatic thinking? With leaders capable of comprehending with what Oct. 7 did to the psyches of the Israeli people?

But that will have to be accompanied by a recognition throughout Palestine (and its allies abroad) of Israel's right to exist and, of course, a commitment to no more October 7ths.

A public "never again."

Not so likely. But what other good choices exist?

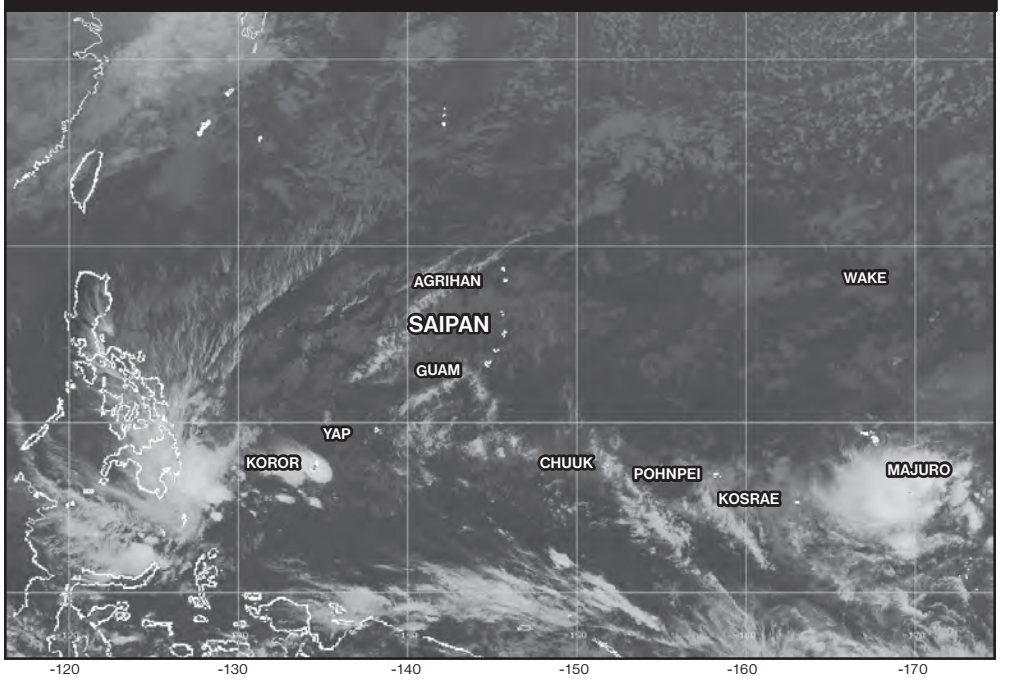
©2024 Chicago Tribune

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Breezy. Mostly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Windy. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 20 to 30 mph.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of light showers.	Windy. Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of light showers.	Windy. Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of light showers.
83 / 73°	84 / 74°	84 / 74°	84 / 74°	84 / 74°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:39 AM TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly sunny skies and isolated light showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet composed mainly of large north swell, smaller east swell, and northeast wind waves mixed in.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	82° / 75°
Palau	Thunderstorm	85° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorm	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Thursday	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	10:05 AM	10:34 PM
Thursday	-	10:38 AM	11:21 PM
Friday	-	11:13 AM	5:18 AM
Saturday	-	12:10 AM	11:51 AM
Sunday	-	1:02 AM	12:34 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	83° / 66°
Beijing	Light Snow	38° / 24°
Hong Kong	Mist	65° / 58°
Honolulu	Cloudy	80° / 69°
London	Sunny	45° / 30°
Los Angeles	Clear	80° / 54°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 73°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	72° / 54°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 67°
New York	Cloudy	40° / 32°
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	53° / 36°
Paris	Clear	58° / 40°
Busan	Sunny	52° / 29°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 36°
Salem	Clear	57° / 43°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	29° / 18°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	40° / 18°
Tokyo	Sunny	54° / 40°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	46° / 41°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:48 AM	Low Tide	0.19
11:21 AM	High Tide	1.61
5:48 PM	Low Tide	0.61
11:02 PM	High Tide	1.30

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

The Angry Penne is 2023 Chamber Small Business of the Year

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

From an outlet operating out of a garage to a full-fledged restaurant, The Angry Penne has now made a name for itself after being awarded the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year at the Chamber's Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

The Angry Penne, a restaurant that serves Italian-inspired cuisine on Micro Beach Road in Garapan across the American Memorial Park Visitors Center, beat out four other nominees to bag the annual award, with a close affiliate of the business, Vincent Fajardo, receiving the award on behalf of chef Norman Chan Jr.

Chan, who was busy cooking up for his restaurant's guests that night and could not receive the award himself, later issued a message thanking the Chamber and its members for the recognition; his team at The Angry Penne; all the patrons who have supported them; and the business men and women who helped spread the word about The Angry Penne.

LEIGH GASES

The Angry Penne affiliate, Vincent Fajardo, right, poses with the 2023 Saipan Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award and Chamber president Joe Guerrero during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Business Person of the Year Gala last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel Saipan.

"We almost completely relied on word-of-mouth to build our customer base. Starting out making pizzas from my garage and making it to this point wouldn't be possible without you all," said the 31-year-old Chan.

He also thanked Michael Sheu, "for his generosity and his patience; for the opportunity to grow at our own pace," his family for their endless support, and his brother and partners Joel Chan and Adriel Chan, for "building the dream" with him.

"And finally, thank you to all the other small businesses out there in the CNMI. Whether you were nominated or received any recognition or not, we are one. Help the little guy. Hire locally. Support local. Let us be the reason why this economy can stand on its own," said Chan.

His message to local entrepreneurs who are hesitant to make that leap to start a business: "Stay passionate; stay humble; work your butt off; remember your roots; dream your dream, and one day, you can live it. The Angry Penne isn't a tech company, but sometimes, all you need is a garage."

Chan started making pizzas from his garage four years ago around the end of summer of 2020 and officially opened The Angry Penne in Garapan on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2021.

The other nominees for Small Business of the Year award were Sweet Lane Saipan, Guam Marianas Training Center, Eucon Medical Health Services, and Tyler's Gelatte Stone.

The 2023 Business Person of the Year was Perry A. Inos Jr.; Non-Profit of the Year winner is the Autism Society of the CNMI; the 2023 Sustainable Business of the Year is Caravan of Food; and the 2023 Chamber Member of the Year is the Northern Marianas College.

Facing scrutiny over quality control, Boeing has withdrawn request for safety exemption

SEATTLE (AP)—Facing severe criticism after a door plug blew out on a 737 Max over Oregon this month, Boeing said Monday that it is withdrawing a request for a safety exemption needed to certify a new model of the plane.

The company asked federal regulators late last year to allow it to begin delivering its 737 Max 7 airliner to customers even though it does not meet a safety standard designed to prevent part of the engine housing from overheating and breaking off during flight.

But after a door panel blew out on a different version of the plane—a Max 9—leaving a gaping hole in the fuselage of an Alaska Airlines flight out of Portland, Oregon, on Jan. 5, the company's quality control and commitment to safety have been questioned.

Last week, Democratic Sens. Maria Cantwell, chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, and Tammy Duckworth, chair of its aviation safety subcommittee, urged the Federal Aviation Administration to deny the request. Boeing said Monday it would withdraw it.

"While Boeing never should have sought this exemption to put another new aircraft with a known safety defect into service in the first place, I'm both relieved and appreciative that they are putting the flying public's safety first by withdrawing this petition," Duckworth, of Illinois, said in an emailed statement. "I hope this decision marks the beginning of a turnaround in Boeing's safety culture."

In its announcement, the company said it was "committed to being transparent, listening to all our stakeholders and taking action to strengthen safety and quality at Boeing."

The safety standard concerns an anti-icing system, and the issue affects other models of the 737 Max that are already flying.

Federal officials said last year that Boeing was working to fix the hazard on current Max planes, and in the meantime regulators urged pilots to limit the de-icing system's use in dry conditions because inlets around the engines could get too hot and parts of the housing could break away and strike the plane, possibly breaking windows and causing rapid decompression.

The issue affects only the Max because it has engine inlets made from carbon composite materials rather than metal.

The company had hoped to be able to deliver its new, smaller Max 7 to customers and have pilots operate the model under the guidance given to Max 8 and Max 9 pilots. It asked for an exemption until May 2026 while it worked on a long-term fix.

In its statement, Boeing said that while it believed the exemption request followed "established FAA processes to ensure safe operation," the company will "instead incorporate an engineering solution that will be completed during the certification process."

"This is good news," Cantwell said in an emailed statement Monday night. "I hope this means they can quickly develop a compliant design across other MAX planes."

The FAA grounded all Max 9s in the U.S. the day after the blowout. Last week the agency approved the inspection and maintenance process to return the planes to flying, and Alaska and United Airlines—the only two U.S. airlines that fly Max 9s—began returning some to service in the last few days.

Southwest Airlines, the main customer for the Max 7, reported last week that it had removed the model from its fleet plans for 2024 while Boeing works with the FAA to certify it.

The FAA said last year that it had not received any reports of the overheating problem happening on Max flights, but that it issued the warning to pilots because of the severity of the risk, which was discovered on a test flight.

The 737 Max went into service in May 2017. Two of the planes crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. All Max jets were grounded worldwide for nearly two years while the company made changes to an automated flight-control system that pushed the nose down based on faulty sensor readings.

More recently, Max deliveries have been interrupted to fix manufacturing flaws, and last month the company told airlines to inspect the planes for a possible loose bolt in the rudder-control system.

Boeing Commercial Airplanes president and CEO Stan Deal said in a message to Boeing employees Friday that the company's most immediate goal is to help airlines restore operations.

"Frankly, we have disappointed and let them down," he wrote. "We are deeply sorry for the significant disruption and frustration for our customers, some of whom have been publicly and unfairly criticized."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Toyota urges owners of old Corolla, Matrix, RAV4 models to park them until air bags replaced

DETROIT (AP)—Toyota and General Motors are telling the owners of about 61,000 older Corolla, Matrix, RAV4 and Pontiac Vibe models to stop driving them because their Takata air bag inflators are at risk of exploding and hurling shrapnel. The urgent warning Monday covers certain Corolla compact cars and Matrix hatchbacks from the 2003 and 2004 model years, as well as the RAV4 small SUV from 2004 and 2005. Also covered are about 11,000 Pontiac Vibes from 2003 and 2004, which are essentially the same as the Matrix and were made at the same California factory. Most of the vehicles are in the U.S. "If the air bag deploys, a part inside is more likely to explode and shoot sharp metal fragments, which could cause serious injury or death to the driver or passengers," Toyota said in a statement. The recalled RAV4s have Takata driver's air bags while the Corolla and Matrix models have them on the passenger side. The Corolla and Matrix also are under a separate recall because their air bags can be deployed without a crash, the company said.

Amazon's bid to buy Roomba maker iRobot is called off amid pushback in Europe

LONDON (AP)—Amazon called off its purchase of robot vacuum maker iRobot on Monday, blaming "undue and disproportionate regulatory hurdles" after the European Union signaled its objection to the deal. The companies said in joint statement that they were disappointed but mutually agreed to terminate the acquisition. The deal faced antitrust scrutiny on both sides of the Atlantic, but most strongly in Europe, where regulators investigating competition concerns had been expected to issue a final decision by Feb. 14. Amazon will pay the maker of the circular-shaped Roomba vacuum a previously agreed termination fee of $94 million, iRobot said in a separate announcement, which also disclosed that it would lay off about 31% of its staff and see its CEO depart. Shares of iRobot tumbled as much as nearly 19% on news of the canceled deal. In 2022, Amazon announced that it would buy the Bedford, Massachusetts-based company for $1.7 billion in cash. But the value of the deal fell 15% after iRobot incurred new debt.

Maker of recalled sleep apnea machines agrees to halt sales in US

WASHINGTON (AP)—The company behind a global recall of sleep apnea machines said Monday it will stop selling the devices in the U.S., under a tentative agreement with regulators that could cost the manufacturer nearly $400 million. Device maker Philips has recalled more than 5 million pressurized breathing machines due to risks that their internal foam can break down over time, leading users to inhale tiny particles and fumes while they sleep. The company first announced the problem in mid-2021, but efforts to repair or replace the machines have dragged on for years, frustrating patients in the U.S. and other countries. The Dutch manufacturing giant said it has agreed to a consent decree with the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Justice. The deal has not yet been finalized and will have to be approved by a U.S. judge. Philips executives disclosed the tentative agreement during a quarterly earnings update. Under the agreement's terms, Philips would continue servicing previously sold machines in the U.S., but couldn't sell new ones until it meets corrective actions laid out by the FDA. Company executives said they have set aside $393 million for operational changes and upgrades needed to comply.

Nation

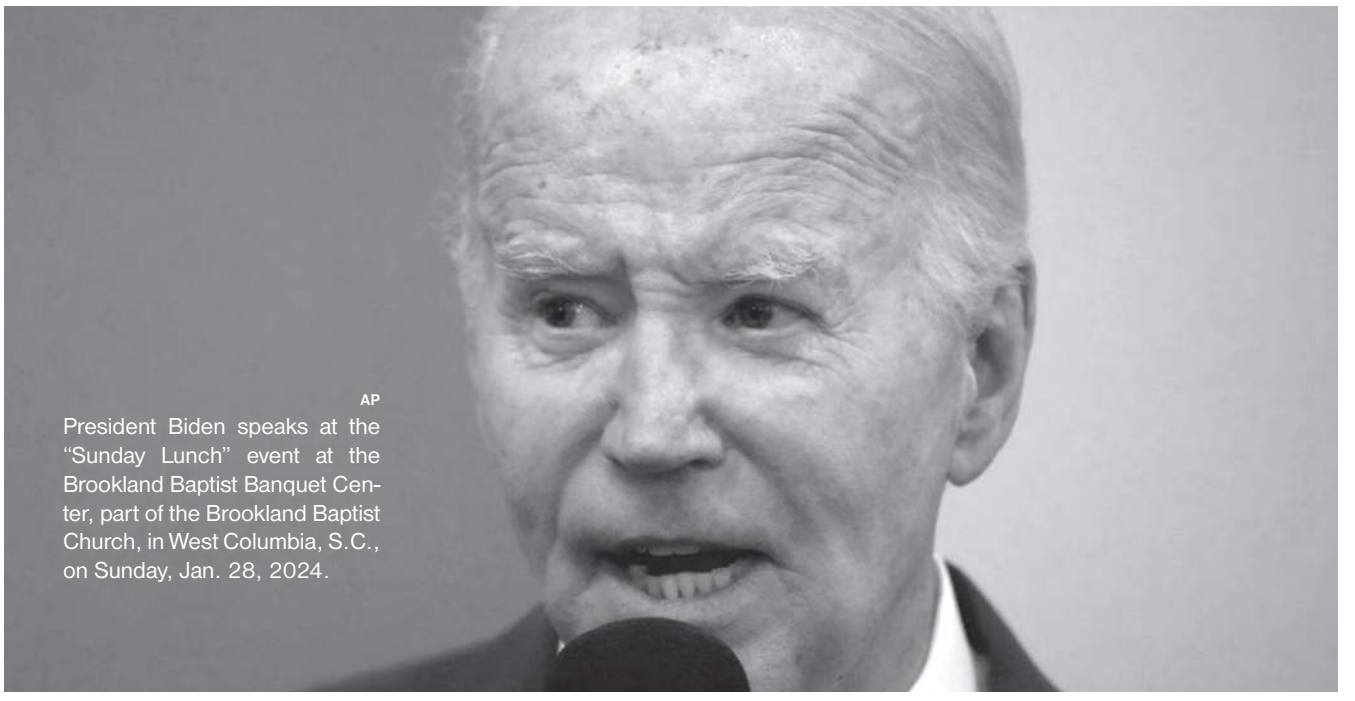
Biden said he'd shut US-Mexico border if given the ability

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden has made some strong claims over the past few days about shutting down the U.S.-Mexico border as he tries to salvage a border deal in Congress that would also unlock money for Ukraine.

The deal had been in the works for months and seemed to be nearing completion in the Senate before it began to fall apart, largely because Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump doesn't want it to happen.

"A bipartisan bill would be good for America and help fix our broken immigration system and allow speedy access for those who deserve to be here, and Congress needs to get it done," Biden said over the weekend. "It'll also give me as president, the emergency authority to shut down the border until it could get back under control. If that bill were the law today, I'd shut down the border right now and fix it quickly."

A look at what Biden meant, and the political and policy considerations at play:



AP

President Biden speaks at the "Sunday Lunch" event at the Brookland Baptist Banquet Center, part of the Brookland Baptist Church, in West Columbia, S.C., on Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024.

WHERE IS BIDEN'S TOUGH TALK COMING FROM?

Biden wants continued funding for Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion. Senate Republicans had initially said they would not consider more money for Kyiv unless it was combined with a deal to manage the border.

As the talks have progressed, Biden has come to embrace efforts to reach a bipartisan border security deal after years of gridlock on overhauling the immigration system. But his statement that he would shut down the border "right now" if Congress passed the proposed deal is more about politics than policy.

He is seeking to disarm criticism of his handling of migration at the border as immigration becomes an increasing matter of concern to Americans in the leadup to the presidential election.

WOULD THE BORDER REALLY SHUT DOWN UNDER THE DEAL?

No. Trade would continue, people who are citizens and legal residents could continue to go back and forth.

Biden is referencing an expulsion authority being negotiated by the lawmakers that would automatically kick in on days when illegal crossings reached more than 5,000 over a five-day average across the Southern border, which is currently seeing as many as 10,000 crossings per day. The authority shuts down asylum screenings for those who cross illegally. Migrants could still apply at ports of entry until crossings dipped below 3,750 per day. But these are estimates, the final tally hasn't been ironed out.

There's also an effort to change how asylum cases are processed. Right now, it takes several years for a case to be resolved and in the meantime, many migrants are released into the country to wait. Republicans see that as one reason that additional migrants are motivated to come to the U.S.

The goal would be to shrink the resolution time to six months. It would also raise the standards for which migrants can apply for asylum in the first place. The standard right now is broad by design so that potential asylum seekers aren't left out, but critics argue the system is being abused.

ACROSS THE NATION

After White House bid ends, DeSantis still focused on Washington's problems

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)—On the heels of a failed presidential bid, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis finally weighed in on what he wants state lawmakers to do this year: Change Washington. Less than two weeks after suspending his presidential campaign and less than halfway through the annual 60-day legislative session, DeSantis held a news conference Monday with cheering supporters to say he wants state lawmakers to seek U.S. constitutional amendments to create term limits for Congress and a balanced federal budget. But the ideas aren't new and 33 other states would have to join him, the governor acknowledged in front of a sign that read "HOLD WASHINGTON ACCOUNTABLE." "There's actually been a lot that have done it over the years," DeSantis said of other states. "Florida has already done the term limits, about 10, 12 years ago."

Unlike most years, DeSantis largely avoided giving lawmakers a blueprint for this year's legislative session. His speech to kick it off largely sounded like a list-ditch argument to Iowa voters the week before he came in a distant second to former President Donald Trump in the first-in-the-nation caucuses. Now that the House has already passed bills on the proposed U.S. amendments and the Senate is on the verge of doing the same, DeSantis flew to Naples more than 330 miles (531 kilometers) from the Capitol to have his say, too.

5 suspects arrested in California desert killings in dispute over marijuana, sheriff's officials say

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP)—The six men found dead at a remote dirt crossroads in the Southern California desert last week were likely shot to death in a dispute over marijuana, sheriff's officials said Monday as they announced the arrests of five men suspected in the violence. Authorities discovered the bodies Tuesday in the Mojave Desert outside El Mirage after someone called 911 and said in Spanish that he had been shot, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Sgt. Michael Warrick said during a news conference. All the victims were likely shot to death, and four of the bodies had been partially burned together, Warrick said. A fifth victim was found inside a Chevy Trailblazer, and the sixth was discovered nearby the following day, he said. "It looks like illicit marijuana was the driving force behind these murders," Sheriff Shannon Dicus said, adding that the area is known for illegal marijuana growing operations.

After Alabama pioneers nitrogen gas execution, Ohio may be poised to follow

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Ohio politicians may be poised to consider whether the state might break its unofficial moratorium on the death penalty by following Alabama in using nitrogen gas to execute inmates. Ohio hasn't executed anyone since 2018. In 2020, Republican Gov. Mike DeWine declared lethal injection "no longer an option," citing a federal judge's ruling that the protocol could cause inmates "severe pain and needless suffering." Republican state Attorney General Dave Yost scheduled a news conference Tuesday to discuss "next steps to kickstart" Ohio's capital punishment system. He has expressed support for the nitrogen gas method used for the first time in Alabama last week, when convicted murderer Kenneth Eugene Smith, 58, was put to death with nitrogen gas administered through a face mask to deprive him of oxygen. The execution took about 22 minutes from the time between the opening and closing of curtains to the viewing room. Smith seemed to remain conscious for several minutes.

There's wave of new bills to define antisemitism

Lawmakers in more than a half-dozen U.S. states are pushing laws to define antisemitism, triggering debates about free speech and bringing complicated world politics into statehouses.

Supporters say it's increasingly important to add a definition that lays out how to determine whether some criticism of Israel also amounts to hatred of Jewish people. In so doing, lawmakers cited the Oct. 7 attacks in which Hamas killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 hostages back to Gaza, which sparked a war that has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians.

"For anybody that didn't think that anti-Zionism could cross into antisemitism, the rest of the world could see that it had," said Democratic Rep. Esther Panitch, the only Jewish member of Georgia's Legislature and one of the sponsors of a bill that the state Legislature passed last week. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp is expected to sign.

Defined in 2016 by the the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, antisemitism is "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

But Kenneth Stern, the author of IHRA's definition, said using such language in law is problematic.

"There's an increasingly large number of young Jews for whom their Judaism leads to an antizionist position," said Stern, director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate. "I don't want the state to decide that issue."

Over the past three months, there has been a rise in protests around the country calling for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages. A coalition of organizations, including Jewish Voice for Peace and CAIR, issued a joint statement saying that the Georgia bill "falsely equates critiques of Israel and Zionism with discrimination against Jewish people."

Measures using the same definition of antisemitism—but in anti-discrimination laws—have advanced in legislative chambers in Indiana and South Dakota. A report from the Anti-Defamation League last year found major increases in antisemitic incidents in Georgia and Indiana, but not in South Dakota, where fewer than 10 a year were recently reported.

Other legislation with the definition is pending in at least five other states this year.

Bill supporters say that more than 30 states have adopted the definition in some way over the years. Before now, the legal definitions—including in New York, the state with the largest Jewish population—came primarily through resolutions or executive orders rather than forceful laws.

In other parts of the country, Iowa incorporated the definition into law in 2022 and Virginia did the same last year, among others.

Lawmakers say their bills are in response to the Oct. 7 attacks, though before that, the problem of antisemitism has been on the rise in the U.S. and globally. Since the Israel-Hamas war erupted, several states have passed resolutions condemning Hamas and voicing support for Israel.

Thousands of entities around the world, including the U.S. State Department, major companies and colleges, have officially recognized the definition, with groups including the American Jewish Committee supporting it.

However the U.S. Congress and American Bar Association have declined to do so. Among those urging lawmakers to vote no are chapters of the ACLU.

"There is fundamental First Amendment harm whenever the state tries to silence pure speech on the basis of its viewpoint," said said Brian Hauss, an ACLU lawyer.

Backers of the laws emphasize that they're not trying to ban speech but rather decipher between actions that amount to discrimination or hate crimes, which carry different degrees of severity. ***(AP)***

Asia

S. Korea says North fired cruise missiles

AP

A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles into waters off its western coast Tuesday in its third launch of such weapons this month, South Korea's military said, as the North continues to flaunt its expanding arsenal of weapons designed to overwhelm its rival's defenses.

» 3rd launch of such weapons this month

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean and U.S. militaries were analyzing the launches that were detected around 7 a.m. It did not immediately provide more details, including the number of missiles fired, how far they flew, and whether they were launched from land or sea.

The launch followed tests on Jan. 24 and Jan. 28 of the Pulhwasal-3-31 cruise missile North Korea says is designed to be fired from submarines.

Following the second launch, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reiterated his goal of building a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he described as growing external threats. It's not yet clear if that water launch Sunday was conducted from an actual submarine or an underwater barge.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, after Kim accelerated his weapons development to an unprecedented pace while issuing provocative nuclear threats against the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The United States and its Asian allies in response have strengthened their combined military exercises, which are increasingly featuring U.S. strategic assets such as aircraft carriers, long-range bombers and nuclear-powered submarines. The countries are also sharpening their deterrence strategies, with Seoul in particular seeking stronger assurances from Washington that the United States would swiftly and decisively use its nukes to defend its ally in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack.

The North on Jan. 14 also tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range missile, which underscored its efforts to advance its weapons that could target U.S. assets in the Pacific, including the military hub of Guam.

There are concerns that Kim, emboldened by the steady advancement of his nuclear arsenal and strengthened ties with Russia, would further ramp up pressure against his rivals in an election year in the United States and South Korea.

A group of Japanese citizens launches lawsuit against police to stop alleged 'racial profiling'

TOKYO (AP)—A group of Japanese citizens, including a man of Pakistani descent, launched a civil lawsuit against the country's police on Monday, accusing the authorities of racial profiling and discrimination and demanding an end to the alleged practice.

The case, to be heard in Tokyo District Court, comes as Japan in recent years has seen an influx of workers from abroad. The number of non-Japanese living in Japan reached a record high last year, at nearly 3 million people.

One of the three plaintiffs, Syed Zain, a 26-year-old Japanese citizen of Pakistani descent, says he has been repeatedly stopped by police, including getting searched in front of his home. He has lived in Japan for two decades, attended Japanese schools and is fluent in the language, he said.

"They don't recognize us as a Japanese," he said of the police. "From the first moment, they think I'm a criminal."

The three plaintiffs are demanding 3 million yen ($20,000) each in punitive damages over "unconstitutional and illegal" treatment, plus 300,000 yen ($2,000) per plaintiff in attorney fees.

"Racial profiling is nothing but discrimination on the basis of race, nationality and color," their claim alleges.

The complaint targets the government as well as the national, Tokyo and Aichi prefectural police departments. There has been no immediate comment by the authorities.

The plaintiffs claim that getting stopped by police for apparently no reason violates the Japanese constitution, which provides equality under the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. They also say it goes against international treaties Japan has signed.

Motoki Taniguchi, one the lawyers representing the three, said it was difficult for foreigners or Japanese of non-Japanese ancestry to sue the government because of their concerns about being targeted by police.

Hearings in the case are expected to last about a year.

World

AFTER DRONE STRIKE IN JORDAN

Biden: US 'shall respond' after 3 US troops killed

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—President Joe Biden said Sunday that the U.S. "shall respond" after three American troops were killed and dozens more were injured in an overnight drone strike in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. Biden blamed Iran-backed militias for the first U.S. fatalities after months of strikes by such groups against American forces across the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden, who was traveling in South Carolina, asked for a moment of silence during an appearance at a Baptist church's banquet hall.

"We had a tough day last night in the Middle East. We lost three brave souls in an attack on one of our bases," he said. After the moment of silence, Biden added, "and we shall respond."

With an increasing risk of military escalation in the region, U.S. officials were working to conclusively identify the precise group responsible for the attack, but they have assessed that one of several Iranian-backed groups was behind it.

Biden said in a written statement that the United States "will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner (of) our choosing." Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said "we will take all necessary actions to defend the United States, our troops, and our interests."

Iran-backed fighters in east Syria began evacuating their posts, fearing U.S. airstrikes, according to Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet. He told The Associated Press that the areas are the strongholds of Mayadeen and Boukamal.

U.S. Central Command said at least 34 troops were injured by the one-way attack drone, with eight flown out of Jordan for follow-up care. It described the eight as being in stable condition.

The large drone struck a logistics support base in Jordan known as Tower 22. It is along the Syrian border and is used largely by troops involved in the advise-and-assist mission for Jordanian forces.

Central Command said approximately 350 U.S. Army and Air Force personnel were deployed to the base. The three who were killed and most of the wounded were Army soldiers, according to several U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to give details not yet made public.

The small installation, which Jordan does not publicly disclose, includes U.S. engineering, aviation, logistics and security troops. Austin said the troops were deployed there "to work for the lasting defeat of ISIS." Three officials said the drone struck near the troops' sleeping quarters, which they said explained the high casualty count.

The U.S. military base at al-Tanf in Syria is just 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Tower 22. The Jordanian installation provides a critical logistical hub for U.S. forces in Syria, including those at al-Tanf, which is near where the borders of Iraq, Syria and Jordan intersect.

In a statement on Jordan's state-run Petra news agency, the country "condemned the terrorist attack" that targeted the U.S. troops. That report described the drone strike as targeting "an outpost on the border with Syria" and said it did not wound any Jordanian troops.

"Jordan will continue to counter terrorism and the smuggling of drugs and weapons across the Syrian border into Jordan, and will confront with firmness and determination anyone who attempts to attack the security of the kingdom," the statement attributed to Muhannad Mubaidin, a government spokesman, said.

Ukraine strikes on targets inside Russia hurt Putin's efforts to show war isn't hitting home

The wail of air raid sirens is commonplace in Belgorod, a Russian border city whose residents are on edge following a Ukrainian missile attack on a New Year's holiday weekend that left dozens of people dead and injured.

A spectacular explosion rocked a huge fuel export terminal on the Baltic Sea southwest of St. Petersburg this month from a Ukrainian drone, forcing the energy company Novatek to suspend operations for several days.

Last week, an apparent drone attack in the Black Sea port of Tuapse in the southern Krasnodar region hit one of Russia's largest refineries and ignited a fire, while another big refinery in the Volga River city of Yaroslavl, north of Moscow came under attack early Monday, but officials said there was no damage.

There also have been strikes on a gunpowder factory in the Tambov region and arms producers and military facilities in the Bryansk, Smolensk and Tula regions.

Attacks like these are dealing a heavy blow to President Vladimir Putin's attempts to reassure Russians that life in the country is largely untouched by the nearly 2-year-old war.

"Ukraine has increased its capacity to strike back against Russia," Michael Kofman, a military expert with the Carnegie Endowment, said in a recent podcast.

"You see increased Ukrainian attacks against Russian critical infrastructure, retaliatory attacks against cities like Belgorod and greater strikes against Russian military base in Crimea," he said.

As Putin ramps up his campaign ahead of the presidential election in March, he wants to maintain an air of normalcy. But the increasingly frequent Ukrainian attacks have raised the visibility of the war on Russian soil, and there are other signs the conflict is increasingly challenging the Kremlin's tight control of the political scene.

Thousands across Russia have signed petitions supporting the longshot presidential bid of liberal politician Boris Nadezhdin, who has made ending the war his main campaign issue. Wives of some soldiers rounded up in a partial mobilization in 2022 have pushed for their discharge. And despite a tight ban on protests, hundreds rallied in Bashkortostan province, clashing with police to protest the jailing of a local activist. ***(AP)***

Good Housekeeping

By MELINDA MYERS
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

ERHAN INGA

It's no surprise that succulents, including cactuses, are popular. These easy-care houseplants come in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes, making them perfect for any home.

How to grow a beautiful indoor succulent garden

It's no surprise that succulents, including cactuses, are popular. These easy-care houseplants come in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes, making them perfect for any home.

All you need is a lot of light and benign neglect to raise healthy and beautiful succulents. Place the plants near an unobstructed south-, west- or east-facing window.

Don't let a lack of light stop you from enjoying these beautiful plants in your home. You'll find many attractive options for displaying your plants while providing the light they need. A single desktop LED plant light, plant light shelves and carts and furniture-grade light gardens allow you to grow these sun-lovers anywhere in your home.

Grow these plants in cactus and succulent potting mix. These fast-draining mixes help reduce the risk of overwatering, which can lead to root rot. Further reduce this risk by using containers with drainage holes that are only slightly larger than the succulents' root system. Growing them in too large of a container that retains moisture longer can result in root rot, decline and even the death of your plants.

Water thoroughly whenever the top inch or two of soil is dry. Some gardeners check the soil moisture at the drain hole to ensure it is dry and the plants need to be watered. Always pour off any excess water that collects in the saucer. Avoid water collecting in the rosette of leaves or the cluster of prickly stems that can lead to crown rot.

Make slight adjustments in your watering regime and growing environment as the seasons change. Find a cool, sunny, draft-free location for your cactus and succulents in the fall and winter. Maximize the amount of light the plants receive by moving them to the sunniest, usually south-facing, window.

These changes in the growing conditions often encourage a spring display of colorful and unique flowers.

Boost your succulents' natural beauty by displaying them in unique containers or places in your home. Create a living wall display with a three-tier vertical wall planter or Mini Magnetic Galvanized Planter Pockets (gardeners.com).

Grow a succulent centerpiece that can be enjoyed year-round. Plant a variety of succulents in a long narrow planter like the Veradek GEO Series Planter boxes.

Whether you're a busy, experienced or new indoor gardener, creating a succulent garden may be just what you need to brighten your home and elevate your mood.

Growing container herbs

By MELINDA MYERS
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

SHAWN HEMPEL

Keep your favorite herbs within easy reach for cooking and seasoning by growing them in containers. A few pots set by your door and grill or on the patio, deck or balcony make it easy to include some homegrown flavor.

Keep your favorite herbs within easy reach for cooking and seasoning by growing them in containers. A few pots set by your door and grill or on the patio, deck or balcony make it easy to include some homegrown flavor.

Start by growing herbs you like to use for seasoning food and beverages, making pesto or preserving. Include some with fragrance for a bit of aromatherapy.

Make sure the plants you select will thrive in the amount of sunlight in the growing space. Most herbs prefer full sun, but some like mint, thyme, chives, parsley and lemon balm will tolerate some shade. A bit of afternoon shade is welcome to many sun-loving plants growing in hotter regions. Check the plant tag or seed packet for detailed planting information.

You can grow individual plants in their own container. Or mix several different herbs in one larger container to create an herb garden. Make sure all the herbs will thrive in the same soil moisture and sunlight.

In general, place three or four plants in a 10- to 12-inch pot, four to six in a 14- to 16-inch container, and six to eight in a 16- to 20-inch planter. Adjust this number based on the mature size and growth habit of the herb selected.

Use a container with holes to provide proper drainage and reduce the risk of root rot. Terra cotta pots dry quickly and are a good choice for those gardening in wetter regions or who tend to overwater. Plastic, fiberglass and glazed pots don't dry out as quickly. Self-watering pots have water reservoirs to extend the time between watering.

Leave a space of about half an inch in small planters and an inch or more between the top of the pot and potting mix in larger containers.

Water new plantings and seedlings often enough to keep the soil slightly moist. Gradually reduce frequency and water thoroughly when the top inch of soil is crumbly and dry. Check containers once a day and more often in extremely hot weather.

Reduce watering and increase success by incorporating Wild Valley Farms' wool pellets (wildvalleyfarms.com) into the planting mix. This sustainable soil amendment reduces watering by up to 25% and adds air space for better plant growth.

Harvest a few leaves and stems as needed throughout the growing season. Regular harvesting encourages more growth for future harvests. Herbs have the most intense flavor when harvested just before flowering. Cut annual herbs back by 50 to 75% and perennial herbs by one-third at one time. The plants will recover for future harvests.

How to boost your indoor garden's beauty

By MELINDA MYERS
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Whether your indoor garden has outgrown its location or you are looking to expand your garden, a bit of pinching, pruning or propagating may be the answer. Grooming houseplants keeps your indoor garden looking its best and plants contained to the available space. You can use some of the trimmings to start new plants.

Give plants with long, leggy stems a pinch. Removing a small or large portion of the growing tip encourages the plant to form more branches and compact growth. Pinching removes a growth hormone produced in the stem tip called auxin. This hormone encourages upward growth of the stem. Removing the stem tip reduces the auxin and allows more branches to develop along the stem.

A soft pinch removes just the uppermost portion of the stem with developing leaves and the stem tip. A hard pinch, more like pruning, removes the tip and several inches of the leafy stem. These stem pieces can be used to start new plants.

Some gardeners pinch with their fingers, but I prefer using sharp snips like Corona Tools ComfortGel micro snips with stainless steel blades that resist the buildup of plant residue or Corona bypass pruners that make a clean cut that closes quickly and looks better.

When pinching and pruning your houseplants make the cuts just above a set of leaves. The plant remains relatively attractive while you wait for new leaves and stems to grow. Avoid leaving stubs by making cuts elsewhere as these detract from the plant's appearance and can create entryways for insects and disease.

Houseplants can be propagated in several different ways. Avoid propagating patented plants protected by patent laws. These laws are designed to protect the investment of the plant breeder. Respecting patent laws allows companies to continue breeding improvements into plants for all of us to enjoy in the future.

Use leaf stem cuttings to start a variety of houseplants like inch plants, philodendron, pothos, dieffenbachias, dracaenas, jade plants and many more. Use a sharp knife, snips or bypass pruner to cut 3- to 6-inch-long pieces from firm, mature, non-woody stems.

Remove the lowest leaf or two that will be buried in the potting mix. This is where new roots will form. If you have had trouble rooting cuttings in the past, try using rooting hormone labeled for use on houseplants. It contains fungicides to fight disease and hormones to encourage root development.

Root cuttings in a small container filled with vermiculite or a well-drained potting mix. Make a hole in the mix, insert the cut end and gently push the potting mix around the stem. Loosely cover the potted cutting with a plastic bag left open at the top. This increases the humidity around the cutting to compensate for the lack of roots.

Set the container in a bright location out of direct sun for several weeks as roots develop. Give the stem a gentle tug to see if roots have formed. Move the rooted cutting into a container filled with well-drained potting mix, place it in a location with the proper amount of sunlight and water as needed.

You'll be amazed at how a bit of grooming and propagating can perk up a tired indoor garden. Share or trade extra rooted cuttings with family and friends so each of you can grow your indoor garden and memories.

Life & Style

X pauses some Swift searches as deepfake explicit images spread

Elon Musk's social media platform X has blocked some searches for Taylor Swift as pornographic deepfake images of the singer have circulated online.

Attempts to search for her name without quote marks on the site Monday resulted in an error message and a prompt for users to retry their search, which added, "Don't fret — it's not your fault."

However, putting quote marks around her name allowed posts to appear that mentioned her name.

Sexually explicit and abusive fake images of Swift began circulating widely last week on X, making her the most famous victim of a scourge that tech platforms and anti-abuse groups have struggled to fix.

"This is a temporary action and done with an abundance of caution as we prioritize safety on this issue," Joe Benarroch, head of business operations at X, said in a statement.

AP

Taylor Swift waves after the AFC Championship NFL football game between the Baltimore Ravens and the Kansas City Chiefs, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Baltimore.

Unlike more conventional doctored images that have troubled celebrities in the past, the Swift images appear to have been created using an artificial intelligence image-generator that can instantly create new images from a written prompt.

After the images began spreading online, the singer's devoted fanbase of "Swifties" quickly mobilized, launching a counteroffensive on X and a #ProtectTaylorSwift hashtag to flood it with more positive images of the pop star. Some said they were reporting accounts that were sharing the deepfakes.

The deepfake-detecting group Reality Defender said it tracked a deluge of nonconsensual pornographic material depicting Swift, particularly on X, formerly known as Twitter. Some images also made their way to Meta-owned Facebook and other social media platforms.

The researchers found at least a couple dozen unique AI-generated images. The most widely shared were football-related, showing a painted or bloodied Swift that objectified her and in some cases inflicted violent harm on her deepfake persona.

The Swift images first emerged from an ongoing campaign that began last year on fringe platforms to produce sexually explicit AI-generated images of celebrity women, said Ben Decker, founder of the threat intelligence group Memetica. One of the Swift images that went viral last week appeared online as early as Jan. 6, he said.

Most commercial AI image-generators have safeguards to prevent abuse, but commenters on anonymous message boards discussed tactics for how to circumvent the moderation, especially on Microsoft Designer's text-to-image tool, Decker said.

Microsoft said in a statement Monday that it is "continuing to investigate these images and have strengthened our existing safety systems to further prevent our services from being misused to help generate images like them." ***(AP)***

King Charles III has been discharged from a London hospital

LONDON (AP)—King Charles III and his daughter-in-law, the Princess of Wales, have both left a private London hospital following unrelated medical treatments that have made the health of the royal family headlines news in the United Kingdom.

The 75-year-old monarch was admitted to the London Clinic on Friday for treatment of an enlarged prostate, which Buckingham Palace described as benign. The princess, formerly Kate Middleton, has been at the hospital in central London for the past two weeks following abdominal surgery for an undisclosed condition.

Charles walked out of the clinic with his wife, Queen Camilla, at about 3 p.m. local time (1500 GMT; 10 a.m. EST) on Monday, stopping to smile and wave to well-wishers but ignoring shouted questions from reporters. A few hours earlier, the princess' office said that she had returned home to recuperate, though she wasn't seen leaving the hospital and details about when she left weren't released.

"His majesty would like to thank the medical team and all those involved in supporting his hospital visit, and is grateful for all the kind messages he has received in recent days." Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

Charles, who ascended the throne 16 months ago, was diagnosed with an enlarged prostate on Jan. 17 after he experienced undisclosed symptoms. He canceled engagements and was urged to rest before the procedure, which was completed on Friday afternoon.

The king decided to announce the surgery in advance in an effort to encourage other men to have their prostates checked in line with public health advice.

The princess is "making good progress" in her recovery, her office at Kensington Palace said Monday. The wife of Prince William, Charles' eldest son and heir to the throne, underwent planned surgery on Jan. 16.

The palace didn't provide further details, but said her condition wasn't cancerous. The 42-year-old future queen has canceled her public engagements until after Easter.

Judge denies Cher temporary conservatorship over her son

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A judge on Monday rejected Cher's request that her adult son be put into a court conservatorship controlling his money.

The Oscar- and Grammy-winning singer and actor had argued in a petition that 47-year-old Elijah Blue Allman's large payments from the trust of his late father, rocker Gregg Allman, are putting him in danger because of his struggles with mental health and substance abuse.

But Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Jessica A. Uzcategui was not convinced that a conservatorship was urgently needed and declined the petition, though she will still consider a larger, long-term conservatorship at a hearing in March.

Cher observed the hearing remotely. She appeared on a large screen in the courtroom throughout, but did not take part in the arguments.

Allman was in the courtroom with his his attorneys, who acknowledged his previous struggles but argued that he is in a good place now, attending meetings, getting treatment and reconciling with his previously estranged wife.

"We are thrilled that the court saw that he does not need a temporary conservatorship," Allman's lawyer said as he stood alongside him outside the courthouse. "He's got a lot of support, he's doing great."

Wife finds it difficult to accept husband's past

DEAR ABBY: After 17 years of marriage, I learned, to my dismay, that when he was 22, my husband had a long-term relationship with a 16-year-old. He insisted that she had lied about her age and told him she was 20.

But even after finding out her true age, he went back to her. Her mother was OK with it, as well as other family members who all knew she was underage. It makes me sick to my stomach. They engaged in sexual activity when she was underage. They were even engaged until she allegedly cheated.

I'm livid because he tried to say he TOLD me she was underage, but he never did. I would never have dated or married someone who knowingly had sex with an underaged individual. I've been questioning a lot about this marriage, but this sent me over the top. Am I overreacting because he "was young and dumb" and "did something stupid and never did it again," as he puts it?

CAN'T GET OVER IT

DEAR CAN'T: The most important line in your letter as far as I am concerned is this one: "I've been questioning a lot about this marriage." The first item on your agenda should be to make an appointment with a licensed marriage and family therapist so you and your husband can start working on what's wrong with your relationship.

His feelings for that girl were sincere. He would have married her had she not cheated on him. If he has been a faithful and caring husband since your marriage, it's time to forgive him for his youthful indiscretion, which was encouraged by the girl's family.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My son and daughter-in-law are in their early 30s. They have a 5-year-old child who hasn't seen a doctor since infancy. They opted not to vaccinate. Although my husband and I do not agree with it, we keep our mouths shut.

Our precious granddaughter has been sick with a severe cough and fever on and off for close to two months. Although they have health insurance, they refuse to take her to a doctor. They treat her with over-the-counter meds and holistic remedies.

I finally told my daughter-in-law I felt it was negligence to not take the child to a pediatrician. The other grandmother feels the same way I do. Now I'm being "canceled" for finally expressing how I feel. I am disconsolate with the thought that they would actually do that to me. I did apologize for my choice of words and the way I said them.

What else can I do to make things right again? My son is no help. He doesn't go against his wife for any reason.

HEARTBROKEN NANA IN FLORIDA

DEAR NANA: If I read your letter correctly, you stated that your grandchild has had no vaccinations. Nothing to prevent whooping cough, diphtheria, measles, chickenpox or polio. To me, that describes GROSS negligence. Because your henpecked son refuses to step in, you may have to accept there is nothing you or the other grandmother can do to "make things right again." But the two of you COULD contact child protective services and ask if they agree that what's happening is negligence.

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

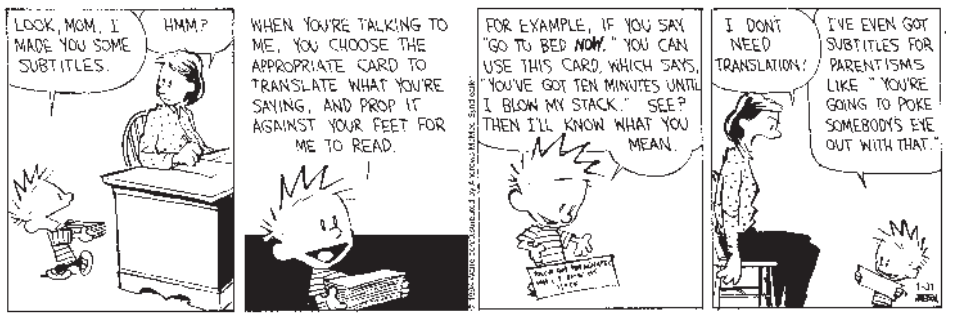
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


LOOK, MOM. I MADE YOU SOME SUBTITLES.
HMM?
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING TO ME, YOU CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE CARD TO TRANSLATE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, AND PROP IT AGAINST YOUR FEET FOR ME TO READ.
FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU SAY "GO TO BED NOW," YOU CAN USE THIS CARD, WHICH SAYS, "YOU'VE GOT TEN MINUTES UNTIL I BLOW MY STACK." SEE? THEN I'LL KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
I DON'T NEED TRANSLATION!
I'VE EVEN GOT SUBTITLES FOR PARENTISMS LIKE "YOU'RE GOING TO POKE SOMEBODY'S EYE OUT WITH THAT."

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

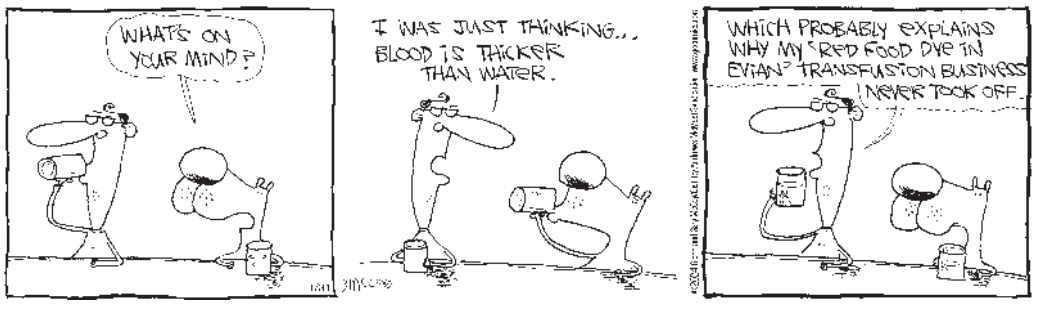
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

KATY, DID CLAYTON TELL YOU THERE WERE SNOW WEASELS?
MAYBE. BUT I BELIEVE HIM.
I THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN PULLING YOUR—
THERE'S ONE! RIGHT THERE!
OKAY, THAT... DID LOOK LIKE A SNOW WEASEL.
THE SUN WAS GLINTING OFF ITS BLOODTHIRSTY INCISORS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
I WAS JUST THINKING... BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER.
WHICH PROBABLY EXPLAINS WHY MY RED FOOD DYE IN EVIAN® TRANSFUSION BUSINESS NEVER TOOK OFF.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

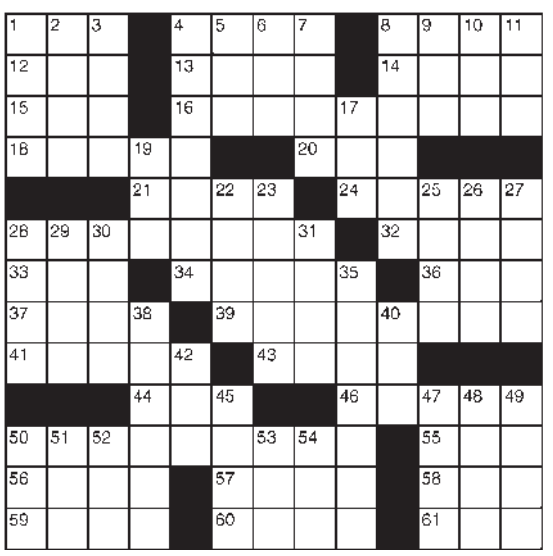
ACROSS
1 Stir-fry vessel
4 $ dispensers
8 Rights org.
12 Swelled head
13 Othello's betrayer
14 Furnace fuel
15 Louvre collection
16 "The Night Watch" painter
18 Meat and veggies on a skewer
20 Pouch
21 "Little Women" sister
24 Merriment
28 Fixes
32 Mystique
33 World Cup cheer
34 Musical transition
36 Bit of physics
37 Yoga class pads
39 Fabric leftovers
41 Unadorned
43 Cabin components
44 Female rabbit
46 Apple products
50 Suave Steele on '80s TV
55 Entertainer Zadora
56 One-named supermodel
57 Powerful wind
58 U.K. recording label
59 McEnroe's rival
60 Probability
61 Cartoon frame

DOWN
1 Feeble
2 Folklore monster
3 "Today" anchor Hoda
4 Inflatable sleepers
5 — kwon do
6 "High Society" studio
7 Weeps
8 Source of gum arabic
9 Swindle
10 Young bloke
11 Last (Abbr.)
17 Ewe's mate
19 Actor Vigoda
22 Wedding cake layer
23 German philosopher
25 Botch up
26 Jog
27 — Christian Andersen
28 Cavort
29 Israeli airline
30 Transcending (Pref.)
31 Wrestling style
35 Web search tools
38 Protective house exterior
40 Venomous viper
42 Dijon denial
45 Waffle brand
47 Oil cartel
48 Ten-cent piece
49 Go yachting
50 Tease
51 Punk rock offshoot
52 Scratch the surface
53 Smidgen
54 Vintage

Solution time: 23 mins.

O	P	E	D		L	O	O	T		L	G	J	
T	A	M	F		A	I	R	A		A	A	A	
C	L	U	B	C	H	A	I	R		U	S	B	
			T	U	R	F		M	A	R	E	S	
A	S	I	O	R			I	A	I	L			
L	I	A	R		C	A	R	C	H	A	S	E	
E	L	I		S	A	H	I	S		T	A	I	
C	O	R	N	C	H	I	P		B	E	T	A	
		B	O	O	N			R	O	S	E	S	
L	E	A	R	N		S	H	O	O				
A	Y	N		C	O	P	Y	C	H	I	E	F	
I	R	K		E	L	E	M		O	M	N	I	
R	E	S		S	E	W	N		C	I	E	N	

Yesterday's answer 1-31



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mario Williams, 39; Justin Timberlake, 43; Kerry Washington, 47; Portia de Rossi, 51.

Happy Birthday: Adjust what's necessary. Thinking ahead will help you navigate your way through unexpected situations. Don't feel you must take on more than you can handle. Do what's feasible, and you'll feel comfortable with the outcome. Take a healthy approach to life, love and physical well-being, and you'll find the perfect balance to manufacture your dreams, hopes and wishes. Live life your way. Your numbers are 6, 11, 23, 27, 33, 38, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Stick to the people who have something to contribute and are willing to share. Your partnerships will be just as important as what you have to offer. Distance yourself from negativity and disruptive individuals who put you down or are looking for an argument. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Set your sights on your destination, and don't stop until you get satisfactory results. Refuse to let someone disrupt your plans or use emotional manipulation or anger to push you in the wrong direction. Be true to yourself, and the right doors will open. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Pay attention to detail, and don't let emotions influence money matters. Spending on something you don't need will lead to stress. Educating yourself before making a purchase and investigating your options before you buy into what someone tries to talk you into will be important. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: You have a choice. Refuse to let someone take advantage of your kindness and generosity. Call the shots instead of letting others choose for you. Make a point to stabilize your life and secure your future with wisdom, participation and kind words. Romance is favored. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Spend more time at home, making your place more comfortable and welcoming. Build better relationships with loved ones, and keep the peace with colleagues and associates. How you treat others will make a difference when you want something in return. Waste less and enjoy more. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Don't spend on unnecessary items. Self-improvement doesn't have a price tag. Choose to learn more, expand your options sensibly, and eat and exercise properly to ensure good health and the strength and knowledge to go after your goals. Happiness depends on good decisions. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: You'll face mixed emotions regarding relationships and domestic changes. Take the initiative and proceed with determination. Refuse to let anyone come between you and your destination of choice. Don't complicate matters or give up too much for too little. Choose what makes you happy. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Rely on your resources to assess a situation before you act. Consider how travel and educational pursuits will affect pros and cons that influence the outcome before you begin. Look for a unique approach, and you'll discover the perfect alternative. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Do your best. Put your mind and muscle behind your skills and knowledge, and don't let anyone distract you. A disciplined attitude will deter others from interfering in your life. Focus on making money and honing your skills. Make physical improvements that improve health. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Align yourself with trustworthy people. Refuse to let your emotions stop you from making the right decisions. Put a cap on spending and look for alternatives to help build equity. A domestic change that offers stability will boost your confidence. Personal growth is apparent. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Don't exceed what's necessary. Maintaining integrity and being reasonable will be the quickest and most affordable way to achieve your goals. Set a price and don't budge. Be the mastermind behind your life decisions, and you'll have no regrets. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Refuse to let anyone limit you. Step outside your comfort zone if it helps you get what you want. Be secretive until you are ready to launch your plans. Keep your costs down by doing the work yourself. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, pioneering and flexible. You are optimistic and meticulous.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		9		1	4	7	5	3
	1							
	7	4	9	3	5		2	
	6				9	2	3	
		7	4		1		9	8
4	9		3				1	
			1	4	7	3		
	5					4	7	
7				5	3			2

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/31

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	9	6	7	2	1	4	8	3
8	4	1	6	3	9	2	5	7
3	7	2	8	4	5	6	1	9
1	2	8	9	7	3	5	4	6
9	5	4	1	8	6	7	3	2
6	3	7	4	5	2	8	9	1
7	1	9	5	6	4	3	2	8
4	8	3	2	1	7	9	6	5
2	6	5	3	9	8	1	7	4

Difficulty: ★★ 1/30

©2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

LOUNGING IN A PALAPA Solution: 10 letters

S	S	S	L	E	W	O	T	S	A	O	C	S	N	Y
E	K	R	D	N	U	O	R	G	N	A	H	I	A	O
L	N	R	I	C	A	N	O	P	Y	A	A	D	I	O
P	I	E	A	A	S	S	P	I	P	R	I	P	L	B
A	R	X	L	P	H	T	P	E	T	L	A	L	S	M
T	D	B	A	B	R	C	U	A	O	A	E	B	H	A
S	T	N	A	L	A	E	S	H	N	L	P	E	R	B
R	E	V	O	C	E	T	T	S	B	I	A	A	E	O
E	E	S	A	B	K	R	I	A	T	T	S	C	S	L
T	N	S	A	N	D	Y	R	M	W	R	I	H	O	T
L	A	O	E	M	I	U	A	O	B	S	E	U	R	S
E	E	L	I	R	D	A	O	R	U	E	N	S	T	H
H	C	D	E	T	V	D	T	M	D	G	R	A	E	A
S	O	V	G	E	O	E	S	S	E	C	U	R	E	D
T	N	E	M	E	C	L	A	C	I	P	O	R	T	E

©2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/31

Backyard, Bamboo, Base, Beach, Bolts, Canopy, Cement, Chairs, Coast, Cover, Deserts, Drinks, Durable, Ground, Hang, Heat, Holiday, Huts, Ledge, Lotion, Lounge, Music, Nails, Ocean, Patio, Rain, Relax, Reserve, Resort, Sand, Sealant, Secured, Shade, Shape, Shelter, Spanish, Stain, Staples, Support, Table, Timber, Towels, Tropical, Water Parks, Wood

Yesterday's Answer: Dress

The NEW Wonderword Grand Millennium #1 in LARGE PRINT is now available at: www.WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Doc Rivers debuts with loss to Nuggets, who get triple-double from Jokic

DENVER (AP)—Doc Rivers saw the same thing coaching from the sideline Monday night as he did watching from his couch all season—a talented Milwaukee team that just needs a little more time to take shape.

Also, that Nikola Jokic continues to be next-level at everything he does.

Jokic spoiled Rivers' debut as Milwaukee coach by recording his 14th triple-double of the season to help the Denver Nuggets surge by the Bucks, 113-107.

"They're great," Rivers said of his new squad. "They're a very coachable team."

Jokic finished with 25 points, 16 rebounds and 12 assists. Jamal Murray scored 35 for the Nuggets, who gained separation during a late 8-0 run.

The game was a chance for Rivers to size up his built-to-win-now club. Bucks players made an instant impression with him—and he on them.

"He did a great job commanding the team, leading the team," forward Khris Middleton said. "It's going to take time for us to get used to him and him to see what we've been doing and how we've been successful so far this season and in the past."

Rivers was lured out of his role as an analyst to take over for first-year Bucks coach Adrian Griffin, who was fired after 43 games and a 30-13 record.

Embarking on his 25th season as an NBA head coach, Rivers alternated between arms folded, hands on his knees and hands on hips in moving up and down the sideline. He kneeled at times, clapped, consulted with Joe Prunty, the interim coach before Rivers' arrival, and even showed frustration over a foul called on Brook Lopez late in the game for an illegal screen.

Rivers watched his new team squander an early 13-point lead, fall behind by nine and then fight back before Aaron Gordon ended the comeback by blocking Damian Lillard's layup attempt with 24.7 seconds remaining.

The game featured 12 ties and nine lead changes.

"I mean, that's why I play—to play these kinds of games, to play under the pressure, to play tight games," Jokic said. "I like to play under those circumstances."

The win was a milestone for Michael Malone—victory No. 400 as coach of the Nuggets.

The significance?

"It means that I've been here a long time," Malone cracked.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 29 points and 12 rebounds for the Bucks, who began a five-game trip. The "Greek Freak" played nearly 37 minutes despite dealing with an illness that had his availability up in the air leading into the game. Had he missed the contest, it would've been the second straight game in which an NBA MVP didn't play at Ball Arena. On Saturday, reigning MVP Joel Embiid was a late scratch for Philadelphia because of a balky left knee.

AP

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) pleads for a call with referees in the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Milwaukee Bucks, Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in Denver.

But Antetokounmpo treated the capacity crowd to a high-flying exhibition (and was called for a 10-second violation on a free throw that electrified fans). He was named the NBA player of the week for the East earlier in the day.

"I try to thrive in those moments as much as I can," Antetokounmpo said of going against players such as Jokic. "And learn as much as I can."

Lopez had 19 points, including five of Milwaukee's 16 3-pointers. Lillard finished with 18 points.

Rivers conceded it will take a minute to settle in on the bench as he steadily meshes his style with the way the Bucks already play. He wants them flowing along and not overthinking.

One thing he doesn't have to remind them of—just how good they are. The Bucks feature several holdovers, led by Antetokounmpo, from the team that won the NBA championship in 2020-21.

"They already know what the goal is," Rivers said. "And they all know that the only way you reach that goal is it has to be 'We'—as a group."

TIMBERWOLVES 107, THUNDER 101

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Anthony Edwards scored 27 points and Minnesota beat Oklahoma City to take sole possession of the top spot in the Western Conference.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Rudy Gobert added 12 points and 17 rebounds for Minnesota, which had lost three of five.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 37 points and Jalen Williams added 20 for the Thunder, who lost their second straight after a five-game win streak. The teams split their four meetings this season.

There were 11 lead changes in the fourth quarter. A two-handed dunk by Edwards in traffic put the Timberwolves up 101-97, and Minnesota led by at least four the rest of the way.

SUNS 118, HEAT 105

MIAMI (AP)—Eric Gordon scored 23 points, Devin Booker had 22 and Phoenix handed Miami its seventh consecutive loss.

Kevin Durant scored 20 and Bradley Beal had 19 for the Suns, who are 8-2 in their last 10 games and swept the Heat for just the second time in the last 17 seasons.

Jimmy Butler scored 26 points for Miami, which was 24-16 and fifth in the Eastern Conference just two weeks ago. The Heat are now 24-23 and three games behind Indiana in the loss column for the sixth and final guaranteed playoff berth. It's the first seven-game skid for Heat coach Erik Spoelstra.

CAVALIERS 118, CLIPPERS 108

CLEVELAND (AP)—Donovan Mitchell had 28 points and 12 assists and Jarrett Allen extended his double-double streak to 15 straight games, leading Cleveland past Los Angeles.

Allen finished with 20 points and 17 rebounds. Isaac Okoro added 17 points—all in the first half—as the Cavs held off a late Clippers comeback and ended L.A.'s winning streak at five. Cleveland is 10-1 since Jan. 3.

Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points and Norman Powell 18 for the Clippers, who got within four in the final two minutes but fell to 2-1 on a season-long seven-game trip.

KNICKS 113, HORNETS 92

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 32 points, Donte DiVincenzo added 28 and New York kept rolling without the injured Julius Randle, beating Charlotte for its seventh straight victory.

Josh Hart chipped in with 12 rebounds, eight points and seven assists for the Knicks, who entered with the fourth-best record in the Eastern Conference.

Brandon Miller scored 29 points and Miles Bridges had 21 points and 10 rebounds as the Hornets fell to 0-4 since trading Terry Rozier to Miami for Kyle Lowry and a first-round draft pick. Lowry isn't expected to play for Charlotte.

CELTICS 118, PELICANS 112

BOSTON (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 12 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter and Boston rallied past New Orleans.

The victory snapped a two-game skid at home for Boston, which started the season 20-0 at TD Garden.

Jaylen Brown added 22 points and 11 rebounds. Jrue Holiday had 20 points and Derrick White finished with 17.

The Pelicans led by 17 in the first half but were outscored 68-52 over the final two quarters to drop their third straight game. Brandon Ingram led New Orleans with 28 points, seven rebounds and six assists. Zion Williamson finished with 26 points.

KINGS 103, GRIZZLIES 94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Domantas Sabonis had a career-high 26 rebounds along with 20 points, De'Aaron Fox scored 23 points and Sacramento rallied past Memphis.

Sabonis finished 10 of 11 from the field and had 16 rebounds in the first half, a Kings record for rebounds in a half since the franchise moved to Sacramento in 1985. His previous career best was 25 rebounds for Indiana on Nov. 29, 2021 against Minnesota, and he surpassed it with 27.5 seconds left—part of a stout defensive performance by the Kings to close out the game.

Sacramento held Memphis scoreless over the final three minutes. Kevin Huerter added 17 points for the Kings, who won their fourth straight.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led the Grizzlies with 22 points and Santi Aldama scored 16 on 5-of-14 shooting.

MAVERICKS 131, MAGIC 129

DALLAS (AP)—Luka Doncic had 45 points and 15 assists and Tim Hardaway Jr. added 36 points as Dallas beat Orlando.

The duo accounted for 54 of Dallas' 70 points in the second half, including 27 of the team's 35 in the fourth quarter.

Dereck Lively II had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and Jalen Hardy scored 18 of his season-high 20 points in the first half for the Mavericks.

Paolo Banchero scored 36 points to lead the Magic.

ROCKETS 135, LAKERS 119

HOUSTON (AP)—Jalen Green scored 34 points and Alperen Sengun added 31 as Houston beat Los Angeles.

LeBron James, Anthony Davis and D'Angelo Russell scored 23 points apiece for the Lakers, who had won two in a row, capped by a 145-144 double-overtime victory over Golden State on Saturday.

Cam Whitmore had 20 points off the bench for Houston, and Jabari Smith Jr. had 18 points and nine rebounds in his return after missing four games with a sprained left ankle. Green and Sengun also had 12 rebounds and seven assists each for the Rockets.

TRAIL BLAZERS 130, 76ERS 104

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Jerami Grant scored 27 points and Portland took advantage of Joel Embiid's absence to rout Philadelphia.

Malcolm Brogdon added 24 points and nine assists for the Trail Blazers, who lost four of their previous five games. Rookie guard Scoot Henderson scored 22.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 25 points for the 76ers, who lost their third straight as Embiid watched from the bench with a sore left knee. Philadelphia was also without Tyrese Maxey (sprained left ankle).

Embiid missed his second consecutive game. The reigning NBA MVP is averaging 36 points and 11.4 rebounds per game.

WIZARDS 118, SPURS 113

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Kyle Kuzma had 18 points and 11 rebounds, Daniel Gafford added 16 points and 13 boards, and Washington rallied past San Antonio to win consecutive games for the first time this season.

The Wizards improved to 2-1 since coach Wes Unseld Jr. was moved to the front office and replaced on an interim basis by Brian Keefe.

Devin Vassell scored 24 points and Victor Wembanyama had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the Spurs, who were seeking their first three-game winning streak of the season.

The Wizards outscored the Spurs 31-20 in the fourth quarter.

Lions lament one that got away after blowing big lead

ALLEN PARK, Mich. (AP)—The Detroit Lions had their best season in generations.

Players, coaches and at least some fans are not ready to celebrate at the moment.

The Lions let an opportunity slip to play in the Super Bowl for the first time, becoming the first team to lose a 17-point halftime lead in a conference championship game with their 34-31 loss at San Francisco.

"We know we accomplished a lot this year, but our ultimate goal was the Super Bowl and we were within reaching distance and there's nothing worse than almost making it," Lions linebacker Alex Anzalone said Sunday night. "These are the losses that you'll remember forever."

Even though nothing can erase the pain for the Lions, there's no doubt they were the source of joy for millions in the Motor City and throughout the state of Michigan in a season that surpassed unusually high expectations. And their future seems promising.

"I think think what we built was hope," running back David Montgomery said.

AP
Detroit Lions head coach Dan Campbell gives his end-of-season news conference Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in Allen Park, Mich.

Hopes were high for Detroit last summer as the favorite to win the NFC North, and the team lived up to the hype by ending a three-decade stretch without a division title and tying a franchise record with 12 regular-season wins.

The Lions had two home playoff games for the first time, earned two postseason victories for the first time since winning the 1957 NFL championship and reached the conference title game for the first time in 32 years and second time in franchise history.

Once there, they led San Francisco 24-7 early in the third quarter before blowing it.

"That feeling that we all had walking off of that field, I don't think any one of us want to feel that again," receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown said. "I think the feeling that we have is enough to motivate us for next year.

"We had a good year as a whole, but it is all for nothing if you don't win the whole thing."

Even though the franchise fell short, owner Sheila Ford Hamp got it right when she hired general manager Brad Holmes and coach Dan Campbell three years ago after decades of poor leadership in the front office and on the sideline.

Holmes has hit much more than he's missed in three drafts, giving the franchise plenty of building blocks on both sides of the ball.

Campbell's gambles have led to a league-high 62 conversions on fourth down in his three seasons and 22 wins in his last 30 games, but his characteristically risky moves didn't go his his way against the Niners.

Detroit had a chance to restore its 17-point lead midway through the third quarter, but Campbell chose to for it on fourth-and-2 from the 28 instead of having having Michael Badgley kick a field goal. Josh Reynolds dropped a slightly errant throw from Jared Goff, making the move backfire.

Reynolds also dropped a pass on third down later in the quarter.

"I definitely didn't help," he said Monday as he and his teammates cleared out their lockers.

Down three points midway through the fourth quarter, Campbell went for it again on fourth-and-3 from the 30 instead of attempting a field goal, and Goff threw incomplete under pressure.

"You want to make the most of every opportunity and we had an opportunity, and we just couldn't close it out," Goff said. "It stings."

Campbell stood by his choices, including running the ball on the team's final drive and being forced to use the first of three timeouts.

"I gambled and lost," he said softly at his season-ending news conference about 10 hours after the team arrived back in Detroit.

MAKING MOVES

The Lions start their offseason with $60-plus million in salary cap space, ranking No. 7 in the league, and will have some decisions to make.

Goff has one year left on his contract, possibly making him a candidate for an extension.

Free agents include guards Jonah Jackson, who had a second straight injury-shortened season, and Graham Glasgow along with defensive back C.J. Gardner-Johnson, who was limited to three games due to injuries.

COVETED COACHES

Offensive coordinator Ben Johnson and defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn are among the candidates to be Washington's coach, potentially leaving Campbell with an important role to fill on his staff for next season.

Ravens were excellent this season but still came up short against Kansas City

OWINGS MILLS, Md. (AP)—Less than 24 hours after Baltimore's season ended with a loss in the AFC championship game, All-Pro safety Kyle Hamilton was dealing with both physical and emotional pain.

"Body is sore, heart sore," he said. "But we move on."

The Ravens head into the offseason lamenting an opportunity that got away. Baltimore finished with the best record and best point differential in the NFL and beat other top teams in surprisingly convincing fashion down the stretch, but in their most important test last weekend, the Ravens still couldn't completely break through against the team that's dominated the AFC of late.

Baltimore didn't seem outclassed in its 17-10 loss to Kansas City, but the Ravens were way too mistake-prone after falling behind early. Experience doesn't decide all NFL postseason games, but in this one, the Chiefs looked like a team that was playing in its sixth straight conference title game. The Ravens? They looked like they were in their first in over a decade.

Baltimore (14-5) hadn't made it this far since winning the Super Bowl 11 years ago. This season was the first time the city hosted the AFC championship game since 1971.

Kansas City appeared vulnerable, with an offense that wasn't nearly as scary as in years past, but the Ravens turned the ball over three times, committed silly penalties and struggled all game offensively.

"Being up in years, you only have so many more shots to do this," 33-year-old guard Kevin Zeitler said. "This was a great team, executing at a high level. It was really fun to be a part of, and like I said, it feels really unfinished."

Not only do the Chiefs loom as the league power that won't go away, but next season the Ravens will have to deal with a Cincinnati team that should have Joe Burrow back from his injury-plagued 2023. Buffalo, Cleveland, Houston and Miami also have enough talent to be formidable.

The Ravens have a star quarterback in Lamar Jackson, a star linebacker in Roquan Smith and a star in Hamilton who just finished his second season. But there will be changes. This is a team with some solid young players, but also one with plenty of veterans who may need replacing.

"The group, you won't get it back again next year," edge rusher Jadeveon Clowney said. "I felt like we had a squad to win it. ... I really did. It kind of hurt more than anything that has happened in my career to lose that game yesterday. But we're back to the drawing board."

POSSIBLE DEPARTURES

Zeitler is one starter whose contract is expiring. Linebacker Patrick Queen is another, along with defensive tackle Justin Madubuike. It might not be as stressful an offseason as last year, when the team had to use the franchise tag on Jackson before finally reaching a long-term deal with him, but the next few months will be consequential for Baltimore.

Clowney signed a one-year deal in August and then equaled a career high with 9 1/2 sacks. He may be tough to keep and tough to replace. Odell Beckham Jr. and Nelson Agholor boosted the receiving corps on one-year deals. Running backs Gus Edwards and J.K. Dobbins can also test free agency. Dobbins missed almost the entire season because of an Achilles tendon injury.

MORE TO PROVE

Jackson might win his second MVP this season, but it was probably inevitable that he'd be blamed for anything less than a Super Bowl. Hamilton took exception to that.

"They can say he's the best quarterback ever one week, and then the next week, say whatever they want to say. But that just comes with the territory," Hamilton said. "Heavy is the head that wears the crown. So, there are a lot of people out there hoping for people like Lamar to fail, but we all know that he's the best player in this league, and I'm glad to have him on our team."

CLEARING THE AIR

Ravens kicker Justin Tucker said he thought his pregame interaction with Kansas City's Travis Kelce and Patrick Mahomes was not a big deal.

"I saw Patrick there trying to warm up and get some dropbacks and he asked me, while I was on the ground stretching, if I could move my helmet. I happily got up and I moved my helmet out of the way—at least I thought it was enough out of the way," Tucker said. "And then Travis comes over and he just kicks my stuff and he throws my helmet. ... I thought it was all just some gamesmanship, you know, all in good fun, but they seemed to be taking it a little bit more seriously. I'm totally willing to let it all go, but I just wanted to explain that that's just what I have done for 12 years and it's not like I'm out there trying to be problematic."

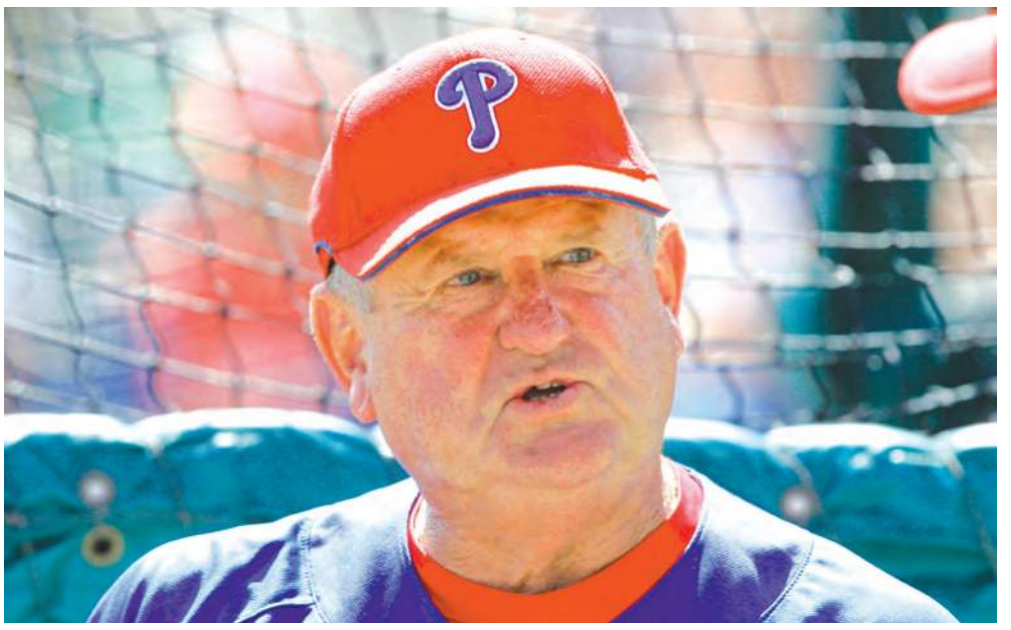
Former Major League manager Jimy Williams dies at age 80

BOSTON (AP)—Jimy Williams, the 1999 American League Manager of the Year for Boston who won 910 games over a dozen seasons that included stints with Toronto and Houston, has died. He was 80.

The Red Sox said Williams died Friday at AdventHealth North Pinellas Hospital in Tarpon Springs, Florida, after a brief illness. Williams lived in nearby Palm Harbor.

Williams was voted AL Manager of the Year after leading the Red Sox to their second straight playoff appearance. He said keeping calm in a clubhouse was easier than at home.

"I've got a wife and four kids. You want turmoil?" Williams said when he was hired to manage Boston in 1996. "You've got to talk. You can't choose up sides and say, 'Let's see who wins this battle.'"



AP

Philadelphia Phillies coach Jimy Williams during their spring training baseball practice in Fort Myers, Fla., Friday March 21, 2008.

An infielder, Williams was born James Francis Williams in Santa Maria, California, on Oct. 4, 1943. He was a 1961 graduate of Arroyo Grande High School and first spelled his name Jimy as a prank in high school.

Williams went to Fresno State, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1964 in agribusiness. He played summer ball that year with the Alaska Goldpanners alongside Tom Seaver and Graig Nettles. Williams signed with Boston, played at Class A Iowa and was selected by St. Louis in the 1965 Rule 5 draft.

Williams made his major league debut on April 26, 1966, striking out against the Los Angeles Dodgers' Sandy Koufax in his first at-bat. His first hit was on May 7, an RBI single off San Francisco's Juan Marichal, like Koufax a future Hall of Famer.

"I can remember my first big league hit, but when you only get three you can remember them all," he told the Houston Chronicle.

Williams played in 14 major league games, going 3 for 13 (.231) with one RBI.

He was traded to Cincinnati and spent 1968 at Triple-A Indianapolis, then was taken by Montreal in the expansion draft and played for Triple-A Vancouver in 1969.

His playing career cut short by a shoulder injury, Williams became a manager for the California Angels at Class A Quad Cities of the Midwest League in 1974 and after six seasons managing in the minors became Bobby Mattick's third base coach with Toronto in 1980.

Bobby Cox took over as the Blue Jays' manager in 1982 and when Cox left in 1986 to become Atlanta's general manager, Williams replaced him in Toronto's dugout.

Toronto went 86-76 in his first season and had a 3 1/2-game AL East lead with seven games left in 1987 but went 0-7 and finished two games behind Detroit. The Blue Jays went 87-75 in 1988 and Williams was replaced by Cito Gaston after a 12-24 start in 1989. Williams had clashed several times with star George Bell, who didn't want to be a designated hitter.

Williams returned to the Braves as Cox's third base coach from 1991-96, memorably giving Sid Bream the green light for the pennant-winning run on Francisco Cabrera's single that beat Barry Bonds' throw from left field and won Game 7 of the 1992 NL Championship Series against Pittsburgh.

Williams replaced Kevin Kennedy as Boston's manager after the 1996 season. The Red Sox won 78 games in his first season and then had consecutive 90-win seasons. They rallied from a 0-2 deficit to beat Cleveland in a 1999 Division Series.

"I probably see life a lot differently than when I was with Toronto," he said after earning Manager of the Year, "maybe not so excitable, from a standpoint of having to say something all the time."

Boston won 85 games in 2000, and Williams was fired in August 2001 with the team at 65-53.

Williams was hired that fall by the Astros, and after two winning seasons he was fired with the Astros at 44-44 in 2004. He was terminated a day after fans at Minute Maid Park booed him when he was introduced as a coach at the All-Star Game.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. headlines18 players scheduled for salary arbitration hearings

NEW YORK (AP)—Toronto star Vladimir Guerrero Jr. headlines 18 players scheduled for salary arbitration hearings that start Tuesday and run through Feb. 16 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Guerrero has asked for $19.9 million and been offered $18.05 million by the Blue Jays. If the case doesn't settle, it would be the highest salary awarded in arbitration win or lose, topping the $14 million Seattle outfielder Teoscar Hernández received after he lost his hearing last year.

A total of 198 players were eligible for arbitration after the November deadline for teams to tender 2024 contracts to unsigned players on their 40-man rosters, and most reached agreements on Jan. 11, when teams and players exchanged proposed salaries. The highest deal was a $31 million, one-year contract between Juan Soto and the New York Yankees, who acquired the outfielder from San Diego last month.

For players and teams unable to reach agreements, hearings will be held before three-person panels.

Baltimore left-hander Danny Coulombe avoided a hearing when he agreed Monday to a one-year contract with the Orioles guaranteeing $2.3 million.

Adolis García and Texas have the largest gap at $1.9 million, with the outfielder asking for $6.9 million and the team offering $5 million.

Right-hander Casey Mize and Detroit had the smallest gap among the 22 players who exchanged proposed salaries but then agreed to a one-year contract guaranteeing $840,000—an $830,000 salary for this year and a $3.1 million team option for 2025 with a $10,000 buyout. The pitcher had asked for $840,000 and had been offered $815,000.

Also slated for hearings are Baltimore right-hander Jacob Webb ($1 million vs. $925,000), outfielder Austin Hays ($6.3 million vs. $5.85 million) and first baseman/outfielder Ryan O'Hearn ($3.8 million vs. $3.2 million); Houston infielder/outfielder Mauricio Dubón ($3.5 million vs. $3 million); Los Angeles left-hander José Suarez ($1.35 million vs. $925,000) and outfielder Taylor Ward ($4.8 million vs $4.3 million); Minnesota infielder/outfielder Nick Gordon ($1.25 million vs. $900,000); Tampa Bay outfielder Harold Ramírez ($4.3 million vs. $3.8 million) and right-hander Jason Adam ($3.25 million vs. $2.7 million); Cincinnati second baseman Jonathan India ($4 million vs. $3.2 million); Miami second baseman Luis Arraez ($12 million vs. $10.6 million), center fielder Jazz Chisholm Jr. ($2.9 million vs. $2,625,000) and left-hander Tanner Scott ($5.7 million vs. $5.15 million); New York Mets right-hander Phil Bickford ($900,000 vs. $815,000); Philadelphia third baseman Alec Bohm ($4 million vs. $3.4 million); and San Francisco third baseman J.D. Davis ($6.9 million vs. $6.55 million).

Ramírez and Adam will be trying to win for the second straight year.

BRUCE

From page 20

ting categories—batting average, doubles, and RBIs.

Maratita is atop the batting leaders with his .655 average from 19 hits out of 29 plate appearances; a close second is Glen Camacho at .652 from 15 out of 23; and third is Norita with an average of .600 from 15 of 25 at-bats.

Maratita has the most doubles with eight; followed by Ton Pangelinan's four; and Bruce Norita, J-Boy DeIeon Guerrero, J.J. Teigita, and Shine Tenorio's three each.

Maratita also collected the most RBIs at 19; Eric Palacios has 14; Norita is at 13; Shine Tenorio hit 12; Glen Camacho and J-Boy DiGuerrero have 11 each; and Richard Quitugua has 10.

Derek Aguon and James Benavente are tied with the most runs scored with 20 each; Pete Sablan has 19; Cartfield Sablan is at 17; Audie Maratita scored 16 times; and Alvin Takai and Jerome Delos Santos have 14 each.

Six players are tied with the most triples hit at two each—Cartfield Sablan, Dennis Cruz, Derek Aguon, Ed Manibusan, Mike Techur, and Richard Quitugua, while 10 other players are tied with one.

On the bump, pitcher Pete Sablan has the lowest ERA at 1.91 from four games and 11 innings pitched. He's collected only two ER and 14 hits, with a 2-0 record. Second is Greg Magofna at a 2.50 ERA, five games and 11.2 innings pitched, one ER, four hits, and a 1-1 record; and third is Kevin Kapileo with a 3.33 ERA, seven games and 25.2 innings pitched, 12 ER, 40 hits, and a 3-2 record.

Kevin Kapileo is still the strikeout king with 46 unlucky victims; Jeff Cruz brought down 20; Pete Sablan and Tony Flores shutdown 16; Joe Kapileo, Bill Camacho, and Tony Flores have 15 each; and J.J. Laniyo and Tony Pangelinan struck out 11 each.

TUTURAMZ

From page 20

some defensive errors.

Asahi 13, Tokahao 11

Tokahao almost had it but Asahi knocked them out, 13-11.

It was a Sunday full of rallies as Asahi came back to win with an abundance of runs in the last two innings. Tokahao led, 11-5 in the fifth, but that was all they wrote as Asahi's pitcher, Dom Hideo, put in the work in the last couple of innings to hold them down.

Asahi's bats came to life as well as they scored three in the sixth and five in the seventh, with a three-run jack by John Taitano.

Man Amigos 20, Hagu La'mun 10

The Man Amigos doubled Hagu La'muns score and won, 20-10.

Man Amigos' stacked lineup produced six home runs—two of which were made by Joey Dela Cruz and Bill Camacho.

Hagu La'mun's seven runs came in the first inning, with the rest of the game making little contact with the pitches by Jerry Guerrero. Hagu La'mun went on to score just three more runs while the Man Amigos piled it up.

Team Redmen 14, Saipal 0

The Redmen silenced Saipal, 14-0, thanks to great pitching.

Redmen pitcher Greg Magofna induced three straight outs in all innings except one for a quick and easy job. When Saipal couldn't put even one run on the board, the game ended early in the fifth from a run-mercy ruling.

The Redmen scored three in the first, seven in the second, and two each in the third and fourth inning.

ACS

From page 20

were the untouchable trio during the game as they held steady in their game play and shots. The Eagles faced a formidable opponent despite giving full reign to their main shooter Eric Lai, who tried to bring them at least within half of ACS.

A whirlwind of points was quickly made by ACS and by the end of the first half, outscored GCA, 30-14. It didn't seem like they were going to slow down any time soon and after half time, continued a barrage of attacks at the basket.

GCA could barely squeeze in through a tight-knit ACS defense as Lai carried his team by being as open as possible. Despite his 16 markers—the most in his team—ACS still got the better of them as Song, Wang, and Cui scored a collective 38 points.

In other results, Marianas High School snagged their second win of the season against Saipan Southern High School, 53-43; and Kagman High School claimed their second win as well against Mount Carmel School, 47-27.

Results of the junior varsity matches from Monday will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

The junior varsity games are played at the Marianas High School Gymnasium, while the varsity games are played at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The varsity championship tournament is set from March 7 to 9.

ACS 50 – Song 14, Wang 12, Cui 12, Ma 6, Zhang 2, Shen 2, Yang 2.

GCA 27 – Lai 16, Yumul 4, J. Taitano 4, Yang 3.

Scoring by halves: 30-14, 50-27.

Doc Rivers debuts with loss to Nuggets, who get triple-double from Jokic.

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Former Major League manager Jimy Williams dies at age 80.

PAGE 19

Bruce Norita hits 2nd homer of Masters League

LEIGH GASES

Dodgers' Bruce Norita hit only the second home run of the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Home runs are pretty hard to come by in the big leagues and more so in a master's league, with the Dodgers' Bruce Norita having the honor of hitting just the second homer of the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

Norita's Dodgers had a mission to take down the undefeated Pirates last Thursday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field, but came up short, although Norita didn't go home empty handed as he hit the league's second home run in the second inning.

As of Jan. 29, he joins teammate Robert Bansil as the only other player who hit it out of the park, but also on the home-run list are batters who hit an inside-the-parker. They are Audie Maratita, Eric Tudela, and J-Boy Deleon Guerrero.

In other individual standings, Audie Maratita leads three bat-

See BRUCE on Page 19

Tuturamz rally to win against Wazzup, 11-10

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tuturamz rallied against Wazzup to win by one run, 11-10, in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

With one swing of his bat, Tuturamz's Jack Cepeda was the hero as he hit the game-winning two-RBI home run in the bottom of the seventh inning.

Wazzup was in the lead come the end of their at-bat in the seventh, as they scored three for a 10-9 game. They should've added more insurance runs as Tuturamz had the last at-bat, but Tuturamz pitcher John Cepeda shut them down before they could do anymore damage.

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Tuturamz' Hank Reyes tosses the ball during their game in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division at the Dandan Softball Field.

Tuturamz actually had the lead in the sixth, 8-7, until Wazzup's Joe Lizama, Chris George, and Derek Aguon scored the three runs in the seventh.

Sufa 8, Peliliu 7

In another close game, Sufa slipped past Peliliu, 8-7.

Sufa was down, 5-7 entering the bottom of the last inning, but Paul Salalila, Audie Maratita, and Mario Aguon scored the three needed runs to win over Peliliu.

Peliliu wasted their six-run fourth inning in which Shine Tenorio hit a three-run homer. Sufa didn't hit any home runs but scavenged for runs as best they could with lucky hits and

See TUTURAMZ on Page 19

ACS blasts GCA, 50-27

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Agape Christian School Torchbearers wiped the floor clean of Grace Christian Academy Eagles, 50-27, for their first win of the season in the varsity bout of the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Friday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Torchbearers rebounded from a blowout season opening loss to defending champs Marianas High School and took it out on GCA with a blowout win of their own.

Daniel Song, Jacob Wang, and Caleb Cui

See ACS on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Agape Christian School's Daniel Song goes for a layup against Marianas High School in the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.